MARION HOWARD
OR TRIALS & TRIUMPHS

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TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS

By F. A.

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PREFACE.

THERE exists, in the present day, a dearth of Catholic light literature. Several writers have labored, and are laboring still, to supply books, suggestive enough to leave matter for thought behind them, and yet light enough to make their perusal a pastime. But, as this kind of literature must be abundant, if it is to meet its object, a regret is still felt in every class of Catholic society, that such books are so few.

The writer of "Marion Howard," therefore, hopes that there can be no presumption in trying to do what more able writers seem slow in doing. This is her principal reason for venturing to expect that Catholics generally, and influential Catholics especially, will give it their support and patronage.

The tale embodies an explanation of religion to those outside the Church, and the subjects are suited particularly to Evangelical Protestants, with whom the writer is best acquainted, and who may be disposed to read her unpretending exposition of Catholic truth.

The work touches upon important doctrines of the faith; the author therefore has not trusted to her own knowledge or judgment, but has submitted every word to ecclesiastics of position and learning.

NOTTING HILL, May, 1871.

MARION HOWARD;

OR,

TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS.

CHAPTER I.

IT WAS Sunday afternoon. Tea had been over some time, and Mrs. Howard, leaning back in her chair, looked out into her trim little garden, with a far-away expression in her dark gray eyes. Opposite, her weekly budget not yet exhausted, sat Miss Leicester, news-purveyor in general to the good people of Ennington, too happy in securing a listener, to criticise the amount of attention bestowed by her. This was certainly not very great; for, keen as was Mrs. Howard's sense of the ridiculous, her wit was flown to a higher quarry than the sayings and doings of the Enningtон shopkeepers. But even Miss Leicester's gossip was better than nothing on Sunday afternoon, with its dull monotony, and so, listlessly reclining, the

lady of the house listened to her visitor as long as she interested her, and amused herself with her own thoughts when she did not.

But everything must have an end, and even Miss Leicester's subjects were growing threadbare. She had discussed the congregation, from Mrs. Stebbing and her blue bonnet, to the butcher's wife and her red shawl. She had shaken her head over many things that were true, and many more that were not, and made quite an Alpine chain out of a few straggling molehills. Truly, as she contemplated the shortcomings of her neighbors, Miss Leicester thanked the Lord that she was "not as other men."

And all this time a little maiden had been sitting on a low seat near her mother, her long curls dropping over her book, trying to find something fresh in "Pilgrim's Progress." Miss Leicester had not even bestowed a thought upon her, so engrossed had she appeared in her book, and she was not a little startled by a deep sigh proceeding from the low seat in question. It was so evidently the result of her last observation that the village gossip felt uneasy, for, in common with the rest of her class, she had a decided objection to "little pitchers," as she styled them. The look of vexation which she directed towards Mrs. Howard was, however, quite lost upon that lady, who only bent down to her child.

"What a sigh, Marion dear; what was it for?"

"I was only wishing people were good, mamma."

"Well, dear, we all wish that, of course; but the world is naturally wicked."

"Yes, I know," said the child mournfully; "but sometimes when I think about it, it seems so dreadful that I feel quite tired;" and closing her large book, she rested her hands and cheek on its marbled edges, and looked up into her mother's eyes.

"You are a strange child, Marion," said Mrs. Howard, softly stroking the bright curls; "but was that all, was that the only reason of the sigh?"

"Yes; there was nothing else, mamma."

"Ah! my dear," exclaimed Miss Leicester, "you have many things to learn yet. All Christians mourn, of course, the corruption of the world at large. Well, it only remains for us, who have received greater advantages, to set the example. If we were what they ought to be, what a world this would be, to be sure!"

Perhaps it did not strike Miss Leicester that should that halcyon period arrive, "Othello's occupation would be gone." Neither did it strike our little girl, she never having read Shakespeare, but she certainly had a strange thought or two of her own about her mother's friend, as she turned back to old Christian and his peregrinations.

"It is time for you to dress for church, my love," observed Mrs. Howard, taking out her watch.

"Will you not come, too, mamma?"

"Not this evening. I feel rather tired, for I did not sleep well last night. Miss Leicester will stop and keep me company, I know."

Mrs. Howard's will was Miss Leicester's law, and that lady simply nodded her head.

"Try and remember the text, Marion," was her mother's parting injunction, as the child bent over her to kiss her.

"Pray do," exclaimed Miss Leicester, "and the sermon, too, if that dear Mr. Lisle preaches. I must say I hope he will not, for I shall feel disappointed if he does."

"I am sure you shall feel nothing of the kind on my account," rejoined Mrs. Howard. "I would not detain you for the world. Marion shall wait for you."

"My dear friend, you quite misunderstand me, indeed you do!" exclaimed Miss Leicester. "I have not the smallest wish to leave you. How can you talk so when you know how I appreciate your society? Why, Mr. Lisle would not teach me more than I know I shall learn from you to-night."

Mrs. Howard's lip curled perceptibly, but she only signed for Marion to go.

"Yes, indeed," continued Miss Leicester, "I count these evenings passed with you as golden moments. One gets so little intellectual society in this out-of-the-way place, while with you one finds the 'feast of reason and the flow of soul.' But do you not consider Mr. Lisle a sweet preacher? O, his sermon this morning! 'Little children, love one another.' How beautiful, how exquisite, how touching it was! I could hardly restrain my feelings I declare, but you know I am such a creature

of impulse. Now, if I only had your firmness of character, your depth of intellect, my dear Mrs. Howard, I would—ah, what would I do?"

Again the lip curled and Mrs. Howard looked into the garden.

"You are such a dear undemonstrative creature: but tell me now, what do you think of Mr. Lisle? I should so like to know."

"Mr. Lisle," replied the other, without turning her head, "he is very well. He preaches good common sense sermons, though he is far from brilliant. But whatever he may be, he is too good for Ennington, where I consider old Doctor Stebbing just in his place."

Toady as she was, poor Miss Leicester smarted under the innuendo, and the little old maid sat silent for nearly five minutes.

Marion started on her walk. It was the middle of June, and all things were bright and beautiful as June alone can make them. As she passed down the street, she overtook many of the persons mentioned by Miss Leicester in her catalogue of woes. But she shrank from them all; for distrust had entered her heart, and nobody seemed good. When she reached the church, a tall, awkward country lad was leaning over the gate, who grinned sheepishly as she approached, and offered her a bunch of cottage flowers. Poor Bill Rogers! All that Miss Leicester had said and prophesied concerning him came into Marion's mind, and she shook her head.

"No, thank you: I don't want them," and with the refusal she passed into the church-yard.

Bill looked after her. "Proud little puss!" he muttered, "but she warn't allers that. She used to smile on a body pleasant-like, onst. It's along o' that mother o' hern. Never mind, if she won't have 'em, here goes." He flung the flowers into a ditch, and more than ever out of conceit with the "gentry," went his way.

It was an old fashioned church, and one that stood the wear and tear of centuries and fanaticism; but its carved oakwood and rich stained glass contrasted strangely with the rough pews with which it was filled. Certainly the alterations, reparations, and modifications it had undergone, would have puzzled the antiquary or outraged an architect. But Marion knew nothing of all this; and only thought the church looked very nice as the sunshine flooded through the crimson glass. Nor did she wander back, as she might have done, to those days gone by, when a more glorious sunlight gilded its sanctuary and hallowed its walls. "I wish it was always like this," she thought, as, having reached her seat, she looked around; "it is so different generally, so dull and dark."

Marion Howard was her mother's only child. Reared as she had been in the village of Ennington, it comprised her whole world. And a circumscribed one it was; for Dr. Stebbing and his young wife, the curate, Miss Leicester, and Mr. Bernard, the doctor, were the only friends that Mrs. Howard

and her little daughter could number. Of these, the rector was too fussy, and his wife too prim, to please Mrs. Howard's fastidious taste; but Mr. Lisle she liked better than she chose to acknowledge to Miss Leicester, though, as his stiffness somewhat awed her, she rather stood aloof from him, while the little old maid and her clatter were only tolerated when nothing better could be had. Mr. Bernard was an exception to every rule, for even Mrs. Howard unbent with him, while Marion found in the good-natured old bachelor the merriest of play-fellows and the warmest of friends.

Distant, however, as she was to the world at large, Mrs. Howard was a kind and affectionate mother. She loved Marion dearly, and being herself an accomplished woman, she carried on the work of her education unassisted. But she was not a Christian parent; and had the child's qualities been less than genuine, Marion would have been spoiled from her cradle. Excellent as was her training for the head, her culture for the heart was sadly defective, and Marion was principally indebted to the instructions of her old nurse, and to a disposition inherited from her father, for the gentleness and amiability that endeared her to all hearts.

Entrenched in the citadel of her pride, Mrs. Howard made all things subservient to it, and seldom glanced beyond. Rank and wealth she shrank from, as only pride shrinks from its superiors; poverty and vulgarity she ignored; those in her own position she loved, shunned, tolerated, or ridi-

culed, according to circumstances. In Ennington, engrossed in her child, she was simply supine; and there Marion neither learned from her the golden rule of love, nor the worldly one of censure. But in London, where the little girl occasionally passed a few weeks with her mother, and where the latter condescended to shine, things were different. Gathering brilliance from her imagination, there even Miss Leicester's humorous stories were struck into sparkling anecdotes, and went off with a flash. Marion, young as she was, imbued with the simple piety of her kind old nurse, shrank from this, and loved her mother far better in the village home, than when she shone, the admired and courted visitor, in her aunt's stately drawing room in May Fair. Her impulse was to love all men. The evil influence had not yet began to work its way, for she had not yet learned to grow suspicious of human virtue, or to look for weeds rather than flowers in the great garden of human life.

At the time our narrative commences, Mrs. Howard had been for some years a widow. Of all the bright points in her character, true devotion to her husband had been not the least conspicuous, and her grief at his loss was no sickly sentiment. Captain Howard had been twice married, and the fruit of his first union was a son, who had been brought up in India from his childhood, and who was now about three-and-twenty. To this half-brother Marion's heart turned with real affection. No ancient warrior, no hero of romance, no celebrity of modern

days, shared the pinnacle to which she had elevated him. The soldier brother "stood alone in his glory." But Mrs. Howard was naturally far less ecstatic, and although her love for her truly noble husband made her read Edward's letters with interest, the idea of a step-son of twenty-three had its drawbacks, and she discouraged Marion's deep affection for him with a jealousy, not unnatural perhaps, in the mother of an only child. "He was not her brother. She would never see him. He did not really think much about her," were phrases that wrung Marion's heart and made her silent, but made her love for Edward a deeper idolatry than ever.

Much as Mrs. Howard had loved her husband, her affection had never extended to his family, and for years, so many that Marion could only just remember when it was not so, there had been a wide breach between her and them. Two or three years after the death of Captain Howard, his mother had visited her daughter-in-law; but wearied out at length, notwithstanding great forbearance, by a haughtiness and assumption she could not understand, she had departed sick at heart. The kiss she bestowed on her little grandchild, with a gift to the old nurse, were her only leave-takings; and she had never seen or written to her daughter-in-law since.

On this bright summer evening, which tempted many of the villagers into the green lanes and smiling meadows of Ennington, the attendance at

the service was but small, and when the sunshine faded once again out of the old edifice which it had brightened for a while, Marion grew moody too. It was with real pleasure that, the prayers being ended, she saw Mr. Lisle mount the pulpit stairs. He was, as we have already said, the curate of the village, and truly and deservedly beloved. Intelligent as he was, the talents that would have shown in a wider field of action were not lost even in a narrower sphere. Unpretending in his piety, unostentatious in his charity, untiring in the weary labor of pastoral ministrations, he was the friend alike of rich and poor. Eagerly sought by all, he was more frequently welcomed as a guest at the humble tea-board of the villager than at the stately dinner-tables of the county families around. The poor, the sick and sorrowful, hailed him as an angel of mercy. But he had his faults; for he was bigoted, intolerant, and dogmatic. In religion he formed his own creed, preached it, and, of course, inveighed with the greatest vehemence against every one who differed with him. Yet he was a man of no ordinary intellectual attainments.

This evening, however, his sermon was a plain, practical address, in which, continuing the subject of the morning, he urged upon his flock the duty of Christian forbearance. He was very earnest, and many a fashionable preacher would have felt gratified at the rapt attention of his rustic congregation. But at last all was over, the sermon preached, the blessing given; every head was bent

for a silent minute, and then all rose to go. Why should they linger, where all was redolent with decaying timber and mildewed baize, when God was quite as near in the bright green fields around? Why remain bowed within four mere walls, while His presence shone so much more vividly in the setting sun, the waving trees, and the farewell warble of the sleepy birds?

Marion paused in the churchyard to watch the various groups chatting and laughing around; lengthening, as it seemed, the little space now left between the Sunday leisure and the threshold of the morrow's toil. There a knot of old men were comparing the prospect of the crops and by-gone harvests; here a cluster of aged matrons discussed the sermon and the preacher; while many of the younger ones, gliding away in cosy couples, were soon lost in the winding lanes. Who that knows country life cannot picture them, those stalwart old English yeomen and their red cloaked dames? The cherry-cheeked damsel, hiding her laughing eyes in a posy of "Old Man" and "Sweet William," while the awkward young fellow beside her places the flower he has been stealing in his button hole? Who has not seen such a village as this, with its ivy covered church, rising from amid the tombs of generations only to be numbered by the historian? Who has not even sometimes almost envied the quiet existence that begins and ends in such a sweet monotony, with joys and sorrows, virtues and vices, all its own? Marion stood and

looked upon the scene, much interested, for the sermon had calmed her. She almost longed to join one of the merry groups, instead of going home to keep her own company in the garden, or Miss Leicester's in the parlor.

"Good evening, little dreamer," and a hand was laid lightly on her shoulder.

"O, Mr. Lisle, how you startled me!"

"What were you thinking of? for, I suppose, for some time to come one may ask you plain questions."

"Of so many things, that really I can hardly tell you. I was looking more than thinking."

"What were you looking at, then?" he asked, as having by this time reached the gate, he half-seated himself upon the low wall, whilst his little companion leaned against the railing of the gate.

"I was looking at the people talking together, and wondering whether any of the dead buried here could know what they were talking about."

"No; how could they?"

"I don't know; though, if they could, there are many things I should like to tell papa."

"You have a Father in heaven, my dear child; you must learn to talk to him."

"How?" asked Marion, looking suddenly up. "I wish I could," she added.

"In prayer."

"Yes, I say my prayers, of course; but that is not like talking. It seems to me that nobody talks to God now," continued Marion, with a sigh.

"I do not understand you, Marion. It is our own fault if we do not do so. Has He not said, 'Pray without ceasing'?"

"Mr. Lisle, if I tell you something that I often think, will you be angry?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, it seems to me that God is hardly fair and just. Please, don't look like that. I really do not mean anything wicked. This is what I think. In the beginning He used actually to talk to Adam and Eve; and even after their time He often came in the form of an angel, and talked to different people. It was God himself who wrestled with Jacob, and who spoke in the burning bush to Moses. Then he might always be seen in the pillar of fire that went before the Israelites. After this, He was always over the Mercy-Seat, and though the Israelites themselves were not allowed to see Him, still they knew that He was there, looking at them through the thin veil, and the high priest actually saw the bright cloud often."

"Only once a year," interrupted Mr. Lisle.

"Was it not oftener than that? I had forgotten. Well, this cloud was God's own glory. It was the shadow of Himself. Then Mr. Lisle, after all these things came Jesus in the form of a man, and every one could even touch Him. Was He at first like any common baby?"

"Exactly."

"His mother knew He was really God, did she not?"

"Of course she did."

"She must have been very good."

"She was a very holy woman."

"But how strange it must have been to have washed and dressed Him. Should you think He ever cried?"

"Hush, my dear child. Marion, we never think about such things. Like pictures of the crucifixion and the crown of thorns, these things show us too much Christ in His humiliation, and we ought to turn all our thoughts to Him glorified. But what is all you have been telling me to lead to?"

"I was going to say, that as long as Jesus was here, He talked to people and they talked to Him, just as you and I are talking now. He cured them, and helped them, and made them happy in many ways. But then He died, and since then, except once when He spoke to Paul, God has kept in heaven. And really, this seems hardly fair to me. Why do you think it is that these people should talk to Him for thousands of years, face to face almost, and that we should never see Him. If there were only a room always shut up, and I knew He was inside, as the Jews did, I could talk to him through the door. Do you understand me?"

"Quite, but I do not agree with you. The veil that lies between us and Christ in heaven is as thin as that which lay between the Israelites and the Shechinah. Marion, we live by faith, the old order of things has passed away, and with it the ordinance of things visible."

"But did not the people who followed our Lord live by faith too, else how did they know that He was God?"

"Of course they did. But do you think the apostles loved Him less and prayed less to Him after He had gone from them?"

"No; because they had really seen Him, and knew Him as He really was. But I always fancy they said very different prayers to us. Do not be vexed, Mr. Lisle; but if I could only see the land where Christ once walked and talked, He would seem more real to me. Of course I believe in Him; you know I do; but the sky seems so very high, and they say space goes on for ever, and so I cannot imagine where God and heaven are."

"Everywhere, Marion!"

"Yes, I know that too, because God is a spirit. But this idea of God is too grand for me, and I love to think of Him rather as the Man of Christ Jesus. This is what I mean. His body was not everywhere when he walked about Galilee, nor when He was crucified, and the last time the apostles saw Him before the cloud received him out of their sight, He was still a man; and yet, now, He seems to be once again a great grand Spirit, that loves us and takes care of us, but who does not come near us any more."

"You are a strange child," exclaimed the curate, looking up at her from the ivy leaf he had been playing with during the conversation, "but do not be alarmed; your ideas are more fanciful than

wrong; you must not, however, indulge in them. When you are older, these things will be more clear. We cannot be too careful in watching, lest, unknown to ourselves, we should try to penetrate the mysteries of God. He manifested Himself once for His own wise purposes, He hides Himself now for the same. It must have been very glorious to have talked face to face with Jesus; but prayer is still left us, and we must pray."

"But I would rather talk to Him," still persisted Marion.

"And was this what you were thinking about all the time you were standing in the porch?"

"No, I did not think of this at all then, I was wishing I was poor."

"Poor!—Why?"

"Because then I should have some companions. All the cottage children seemed so happy together when they came out of church, that I quite dreaded going home to be by myself."

"Have you not your dear mamma?"

"Yes, but Miss Leicester is spending the afternoon with us, and she talks all the time to mamma, and so I have nothing to do but to walk about the garden and read Sunday books, unless I go and talk to nursey, who likes to read herself, and does not like to be bothered. I can amuse myself many ways on other days with such things as my music, but all the hymns I know are the Sicilian Mariner's and the Evening Hymn, and I can't play anything but sacred music on Sunday."

"Of course not. And so Sunday is a dull day, is it?"

"Yes, very."

"I am sorry to hear it."

"I cannot help it; it is not my fault. What ought I to do?"

"Read, pray, and meditate."

"So I do, Mr. Lisle, as well as I can, and as much as I can; but though I like religious books, some of them very much, I do get tired of reading them after awhile, and then comes my dull time. Why, I get so sick of doing nothing, that I get quite tired for the evening service. If you had not preached such a nice sermon this evening, I should have gone to sleep."

The clergyman smiled. "I am glad you liked it."

There was a silence for a few minutes, during which Marion seemed very thoughtful.

"I want to ask you a question, Mr. Lisle, about something that makes me feel very sorry," she said, at length.

"What is it?"

"Are people generally, do you think, as wicked as they are in Ennington?"

"In Ennington!—What do you mean?"

"Miss Leicester says there is hardly a good person anywhere about here. Did you not know it?"

"I do not understand you," replied the curate, with a face of blank astonishment.

"Would you like me to tell you all Miss Leicester said?"

"Yes," said Mr. Lisle, after a moment's hesitation, and rising from the wall on which he had been seated.

"Well, she says Greaves the butcher is a cheat, and so are Mr. Scott and Father Gribble; and that Bill Rogers is sure to be hanged, for he is going all the wrong way. It seems everybody is wicked, even that pretty little Mary Dawson that used to work for us."

"Is this all?" he asked.

"No, indeed it is not. She said something about my dear friend Mr. Bernard, that has made me feel quite wretched. She says he kills more people than he cures. Do you think he does it on purpose? He seems so very good."

"Mr. Bernard!" exclaimed the curate. "Good heavens, what will she say next! What a—" he stopped with an effort. "No, my child, Miss Leicester is mistaken. Mr. Bernard is a clever doctor, and one of the best men I know."

"So I thought. I will tell mamma what you say."

"No, do not mention him; I will call on mamma myself to-morrow, and then I can speak to her about him. Are these all the wicked people?"

"No, not nearly all," and she repeated the slanderer's tale, in which so many a fair fame had been blackened that the clergyman's heart was fairly wrung.

"Marion," he observed, as they left the churchyard, "it will be better for you to say no more to

any one else about all this you have been telling me. I do not, of course, suppose that Miss Leicester has been telling your mamma wilful untruths in all this; but she is quite mistaken, the people of Ennington are very good. Of course they have their faults, but who has not? The greater part of them are poor, and want brings with it many temptations of which those more favorably situated rarely dream. It is our place to try and make them better, to teach them from our superior knowledge, and to help them with our time, advice, and money, so far as we are able. Would you like to visit for me, and teach in our schools?"

"Mamma would not let me, perhaps, or else I should very much like to do so. But what could I teach them?"

"To love God, and to be good."

"But I am not good myself."

There was so much ingenuousness in the reply, that Mr. Lisle could hardly repress a smile.

"Suppose I ask mamma about it, myself; if she will let us have you, we shall know how to make you useful, that is, if you like it yourself."

"O, I should, indeed I should," and the blue eyes danced again.

"How old are you?"

"Twelve. Mamma says I am a great baby for my age, and so I suppose I am. My cousins in London are quite women by the side of me, and they are very little older." And Marion looked down almost dejectedly.

"You are quite womanly enough to please me, Marion," replied the curate, gently.

"Am I?" said the child, chasing the shadow with a very bright smile.

"Have you heard from India lately?"

"No, not for a long time. Mamma says that perhaps, as Edward is only my half-brother, as he grows older and makes new friends, he will not write to us so often as he did once. This makes me feel very unhappy, for he used to write me such dear nice letters. But I think mamma must be mistaken, you know; for the very last time he wrote he said he would save money as fast as he could, to come over to England to see his little Golden-hair. Isn't that a funny name to call me by? but he always does. I am quite used to it now."

The curate glanced at the lovely curls that shaded the sweet face.

"Would you like to see him?"

"Of course I would; but I have a portrait that he sent me last summer, and I kiss that every night, and so feel a little as though I had him. He seems much more real than he did before the portrait came."

"I can well understand that," replied the curate.

"Then that is very much what I feel about our Lord. Even the picture of Him makes Him seem more real, because I fancy what he used to be. Mamma has one, called the 'Man of Sorrows,' that I could look at for ever. This is not wrong, is it?"

"Very wrong; so wrong that you make me almost uneasy to hear you talk so. 'Worship God in spirit and in truth,' and do not trouble your head about any such nonsense. Take care, little one; the lamb must keep very close to the fold of the Good Shepherd. Good-night."

"Won't you come in?" asked the child, opening the garden gate.

"Not to night. Tell mamma I will call to-morrow morning." He took her hand and looked earnestly into her blue eyes. There was something in the little form before him that interested him very deeply. "Good-night, Golden-hair."

Had another spoken the word, she would have resented it almost as a sacrilege. But a smile mantled over her face as she watched his retreating figure down the little street. "I wonder if Edward is at all like him," she mused. "Mr. Lisle is only three years older; but one is a soldier and the other is a clergyman. They must be very different."

CHAPTER II.

MRS. HOWARD was not displeased with the curate's message. Even she could hardly fail to be gratified by the friendship of a man so universally beloved, notwithstanding her indifference to Ennington society in general. Whether, however, she lingered longer than usual over her morning toilette, we shall not inquire, or whether Marion would have been permitted to pluck quite so bright a bouquet, had it not been in honor of the anticipated visitor: be all this as it may, it would have been hard to determine whether the lady herself, her child, or the flowers, looked the most blooming when the curate was ushered into the room, where, under the direction of her mother, Marion was copying a bust of Ulysses.

"I am afraid I am interrupting the lessons," he observed, drawing back.

"Not at all; we were just about to put by, for Marion has been very industrious."

"May I look?" he asked, taking up her drawing. "You have caught the great hero's expression

exactly," he continued; "I had no idea you were such a skilful little artist! One hardly knows which to admire most, the science of the teacher, or the aptness of the pupil; both must have had their share in producing such a sketch as this."

Marion blushed with pleasure, for she felt the kind criticism was sincere.

"How long has she learned?" he asked.

"Ever since she could hold a pencil," replied the mother; "but Marion has a decided talent for drawing. Run and fetch your portfolio, perhaps Mr. Lisle would like to look through it."

"Indeed I should. The idea of a child of her age producing anything like that outline, is most surprising," he observed, as Marion closed the door behind her; "it is boldness itself!"

Mrs. Howard smiled, a warm, genuine, gratified smile, no relation at all to those she bestowed on poor little Miss Leicester.

Mr. Lisle was a long time examining the portfolio. "You seem fond of religious subjects," he remarked, as he turned over copies of Raphael's Madonna, and more than one Ecce Homo.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Howard, "and as I wish her to cultivate her own taste, rather than an acquired one, I have taken some pains to procure the copies. Do not you like them?"

"I prefer other subjects."

"May I ask why? You surely do not see any harm in them?"

"There may be, or there may not," he replied,

gravely. "Marion has imagination, which is a bad element to bring into religion, when all should be simple matter of fact. You, as her mother, can best judge whether these pictured representations of mighty truths have an evil effect upon her."

Mrs. Howard was a woman of the world, and could talk well and wisely of its learning, science, and fashion; but things "not of the world" were out of her scope, and of everything except the broadest doctrines of Christianity she was profoundly ignorant. Whether imagination was, or was not a legitimate element of religion, it had never entered into her mind to question, and she hastened to change the subject, lest she should get beyond her depth.

"Are you fond of flowers, Mr. Lisle?"

"Very," was the laconic reply, as he continued to turn over the drawings, admiring and criticising by turns.

"And, so this is your idea of your brother Edward, is it?" he asked, holding up a pencil drawing of a soldier, under which "Edward" was written in a very round hand.

"No, not at all now, for I have his proper portrait; shall I show it to you?"

It was certainly a portrait of a brother of whom one might be proud, and Mr. Lisle thought so as he looked at it.

"He is a very noble looking fellow, this son of yours!" he exclaimed, glancing up at Mrs. Howard.

The flush of annoyance that passed over her countenance, showed him at once that the relationship was not a pleasing one; but remembering that "a rent is sometimes better than a darn," he continued, without appearing to observe her vexation:

"I suppose I shall some day have the pleasure of knowing him. I hope so, for I am sure I should like him, from his fine open face. Although so different, I can trace a likeness between him and his sister."

Marion crept nearer to the speaker; to be considered like Edward, was delightful to her.

"I am so glad you think so!" she exclaimed; "but I should wish to be like him in other things, too. Mamma and I saw a gentleman last year in London, the one who brought us this portrait, and he says, no one has any idea of the good he does among the soldiers."

"Indeed! Then, if he sets her such an example, little Golden-hair must certainly try to follow in his footsteps, and this is no bad introduction to the main object of my visit; for do you know, mamma," he added, with a smile, "that I have come to ask you to let Marion help us a little with our schools and poor. I know we have tested your liberality often, but we really need workers in our little vineyard, almost as much as means for carrying on its operations. I am sure you will try and let her do something for us. I know that she would soon grow to like the work, and I promise not to over-

burden her. It would help to form her character, in many ways."

Mrs. Howard was silent. She did not wish to give a flat refusal, but, to mix with the lower classes in any way, was a formation of her daughter's character which she by no means desired. Calm, cold, and unapproachable, she was one who never unbent with her inferiors. Money she rarely withheld, but her sympathy she rarely bestowed; and though often munificent, was never charitable. No gentle word ever accompanied her gift, no smile her still rarer advice. And while the poor felt it was their interest to conciliate her, they hated her for the indifference with which she treated them. With her servants she was the same. She expected from them no more than the duties for which she paid them, though she seldom excused their faults, but she never sought their confidence in their joys or sorrows, or advised them in their difficulties. They waited on her unthanked, the villagers made way for her unnoticed, while even the little children, who bobbed down before her on the path, were unrewarded by a single smile.

"I really cannot say," she replied at length; "Marion is so perfectly unaccustomed to anything of the kind, that I am afraid you would find her more plague than profit."

"Not at all," returned the curate, "I should only impose very light duties on her, for some time to come yet, and we should soon train her, with the coöperation of Mrs. Stebbing."

"Mrs. Stebbing! I did not know that she took any active part in the parish."

"But she most certainly does. I have heard her husband say repeatedly, that she is as good to him as a second curate."

"I understand," sneered the lady; "it is to please him she does it."

"Not altogether," replied Mr. Lisle, hurt at the tone; "she does it first from a high sense of duty, and secondly, to gratify him. Do these motives displease you?"

Mrs. Howard smiled incredulously.

"Your flowers are very beautiful," observed the gentleman, rising and walking to the French window; "might I ask a nearer view of them. I have never been around your garden yet."

"Come then now, by all means," said the lady, stepping out upon the lawn. The clergyman followed, and for some minutes they rambled among the flower-beds in silence until they reached a bench in a little corner, fragrant with honeysuckle and jasmine.

"I can see, Mrs. Howard, that you do not admire our friend, Mrs. Stebbing; may I ask why?" asked the curate, suddenly.

"It is no case of either admiration or dislike," answered the lady; "but I was rather amused at your considering her desire to gratify her old husband a praiseworthy motive of action, as though it were her interest to do anything else."

"Pardon me, but I do not understand you."

"Well, Mrs. Stebbing is, I can see, a favorite of yours; but you have asked me a question, and must not be offended at a frank answer. I have not a word to say against her; she seems a quiet, good-natured, prim little woman, though one, I should imagine, without much soul. But do you suppose that any one with any discernment cannot see that she married the doctor for his money, and that therefore it is clearly her interest to please him? I do not blame her for trying to do so; indeed, she would, I suppose, be wonderfully wanting in common sense, were she to act otherwise."

"But what has given you this idea, my dear madam?"

"Why, for what other possible reason would a nice looking girl of two or three-and-twenty shut herself up with an old man of sixty, to find her sole recreation in beating the alphabet into the heads of stupid little children, binding up old men's cuts and bruises, and listening from cottage to cottage to old women's twaddle? Excuse me, Mr. Lisle, but I must tell you that my ideas of district visiting are not very elevated."

"I can see they are not," replied the gentleman, "and I hardly know whether your idea of Mrs. Stebbing or her labor of charity is the more erroneous. But if you will permit me, I will tell you the truth, as it stands. Dr. Stebbing is eight-and-forty, old looking for his age, I grant, though such it is. His wife is twenty-seven. She is an heiress, but her property is entirely settled on herself by her hus-

band. If he carries out all the plans of improvement he has projected, his own money will be spent during his lifetime, so that she will have but small expectations at his death. It seems she first learned his worth about seven years ago, at the deathbed of her father, whom Dr. Stebbing attended as an old college friend. He saw the impression his kindness had made on the orphan girl, but wishing her to see more of the world before linking herself to him for life, he left her undisturbed for three years. Finding, however, that she refused the most eligible offers, he presented himself to her as a suitor, and a happier couple I have never seen."

"It seems, then, I have been misinformed; but I have been given clearly to understand, by a person who knows the rector and his wife, that my original surmise was true."

"Then may I advise you to set that person right at your earliest opportunity, and give me as your authority in doing so? How deeply grieved poor Mrs. Stebbing would be, could she know the unworthy motives that have been imputed to her! Never was scandal more unjust than in this case. But I should have thought that you, who have lived so much longer in the parish than I, would have known Mrs. Stebbing intimately."

"Our old rector had only been dead a year before you came, and the rectory was vacant some little time, so that I have only known Mrs. Stebbing a few months longer than you, and although we occasionally exchange visits, we are still com-

paratively strangers to each other—we have so little in common."

"True," was on the curate's lips, but he repressed the word, and pondered the difficult task before him instead. Now or never, must he come to the object of his visit; now or never, must the proud woman at his side be humbled. Should he give way and suffer yesterday's scandal to be repeated? He leaned his cheek upon his hand, apparently absorbed in the contemplation of a bee struggling in the depths of a blue-bell. The morning was very still, calm with that sweet summer stillness peculiar to a June day, when the sky above, radiant in its blueness, is unflecked by a single cloud. The trees over their heads stood motionless, while in the mid-day heat the very birds were silent. The only stirring sounds were the ripple of the little stream that bordered the garden with the hum of the mill it turned, the quiet clucking of the hens on the opposite bank, and the sweet clear trill of Marion's canary from the house. Yet all these distant sounds only made the silence around them more palpable, and more difficult for the Reverend Henry Lisle to break with his homily. It was not until his bee, having risen like an old toper from his cup, indulged them with an animated buzz, that he commenced.

"Mrs. Howard, will you give me leave to tell you one of the main objects of my visit?"

The lady started; there was something so earnest and yet so timid in his manner, that she

hardly knew what to think. It would not, even if he did, be the first time that she had known infatuation bridge such a discrepancy. In an instant, however, she was collected, and adjusting the cuff of her dress. He had just mortified her, was he going to give her her revenge?

"Last night," he commenced, turning a little pebble with his stick, "I had a long conversation with Marion, did she tell you of it?"

"She simply said you had been talking to her. What was it about?"

"About many things; but, led to the subject by her own childlike thoughts, our principal conversation was of all the sad things she had heard Miss Leicester tell you concerning the village people, and allow me to say, my dear madam, for the greater part they were most untrue. You will perhaps think that I ought rather to have addressed myself to Miss Leicester, but she is, I fear, too far gone in this most miserable failing for anything I could say to have effect. She will always make mischief. It seems to be the very air she breathes, nothing can win or shame her from it. But will you allow me to remind you, my dear Mrs. Howard, that you at least have too much at stake, if only in your child, to encourage her in her most mischievous propensity? There is hardly one whose character she last night aspersed before you and little Marion, whom I could not as easily justify as Mrs. Stebbing. I am only a young man, I know, and anything bordering on censure would be only impertinence; but do let me warn you as a friend to dis-

countenance Miss Leicester's stories before Marion, and, let me add, yourself. 'For every idle word that man shall speak, he shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.' Marion began last night by asking me if the people were everywhere as wicked as in Ennington. Is this the spirit in which she should regard those among whom she has grown up from babyhood, this the light in which she should look on God's poor? Are there not bright and beautiful things around, to give us subjects for conversation, without descending to the shadows of human frailty, if not to the actual degradation of sin? I only repeat a fact patent throughout all the village, when I say that Miss Leicester is a dangerous woman. O! for the sake of Him whose every breath was love, discourage her. I am anxious to see Marion useful among the poor, but it was rather to say all this to you than for anything else, that I trouble you this morning. You must not be angry with me."

"Not at all," replied the lady, with constrained politeness.

"And may we have Marion?"

"I am afraid not. She has much to do in her studies for many years; besides, surely Mrs. Stebbing is enough for this small parish."

"So far from that, we have work enough for five or six tract distributors."

"Mr. Lisle, I detest tract distributing—now you have the truth. Shall I give you my experience of it? My sister was what most people call a thorough Christian, and a district visitor."

"Not much family likeness," was the uncharitable thought that slipped through the gentleman's mind.

"That was when she was about eighteen; she grew worldly afterwards, for at five-and-twenty she eloped from a ball with a half-pay captain."

The curate made no reply.

"'But she was really very pious for all that," she continued, curling her pretty lip. "Now, shall I give you the programme of her proceedings? Her district was a crowded, dirty, narrow, ill-smelling court, rejoicing, as such localities often do rejoice, in the name of 'Beattie's Gardens,' I remember. Well, she used to knock at a door—if the poor things were dining, so much the worse; if they were not, so much the better. In either case the last week's tract must be sought for amid the grumbling of the husband and wife, and the squalling of the children, the former accusing each other of having lost it, the latter cuffed by their parents for not finding it. Then the mockery at other times of visiting a house where the cupboard was bare, and presenting them with a tract. Well, Mr. Lisle, I do not profess the cant of brotherhood with the workingman, nor do I see a sisterhood in starving seamstresses, but I could not do this. And what were these tracts, after all? Sometimes a tirade against Romanism, in which Popery and Paganism were strangely jumbled, anecdotes of precocious children, who always died singing about Canaan, as a reward for being good, an inducement to many children, I should think, to keep naughty;

remarks on temperance, from the pens of reformed drunkards, publicly confessing their enormities with the greatest possible zest and effrontery; the whole seasoned with just the sort of ideas on religion one expects to hear in the vestry prayer-meeting of a Baptist chapel. Now, with such ideas as these on tracts and tract distributing, could I conscientiously give you Marion?'

"Perhaps not," replied Mr. Lisle, who saw that his companion was thoroughly annoyed. "But let me say that, although what you have just said is in a measure true, you have stated the abuse, not the legitimate work and end of tract-lending. As a reverse to your picture, I would say, that to visit the sick and poor is to follow in the footsteps of Him who came not to be ministered to, but to minister; and though in large towns the work is attended with all the difficulties you enumerate, especially if the visitors be inexperienced or wanting in discretion, as young ladies sometimes are, still in the country it is different. Here we seem to know, and take an interest in each person visited."

"Granted, but the system remains the same. It seems to me to involve an unnecessary contact with uncultivated spirits and rough manners, from which the refined mind naturally shrinks. If a poor man wants aid, let him come and ask it, well and good; but do not go to him. There is no necessity for it, for, depend upon it, the poor are never behindhand in making known their necessities."

"That the generality of the poor are not intru-

sive with their wants, short as my ministry has been, I know from experience; while, if there is anything, my dear Mrs. Howard, that can exalt the already refined, it is the contact with God's own poor. By this, one sees the utter worthlessness of human distinction and human wealth. What would not Dives have learned, think you, had he communed with Lazarus? What girl could give all her time to pleasure, her heart to vanity, and her money to dress, if she felt that her fellow-creatures were perishing from want? But if poverty has its own peculiar troubles, it has its own peculiar pride. You look incredulous, but it is true. As a rule, the respectable poor are behindhand in proclaiming their wants. I do not, of course, allude to those whom idleness has reduced to an indigence which they prefer to labor, but to those who, having fallen through misfortune, struggle on, as hundreds, thousands do, unassisted, until discovered by some friendly passer-by. And in the ordinary course of a laborer's life, there must be seasons when, even without misfortune, he needs assistance. Depend upon it, it is our duty to discover this, and to lend, when it is in our power, the helping hand, counselling him in his perplexities, guiding him in his difficulties, and teaching him through all to look to God, and live for heaven. O, Mrs. Howard, can you dislike such a work of love as this, undertaken for Christ, continued in Christ, and ending only with Christ?"

She was silent, and once more the summer stillness prevailed. Again the hens clucked, the

canary sang, and another bee buzzed in the blue-bell. Their reflections were very different; he rejoicing truly that his task was over—she silently fuming, fretting and chafing. He had done his duty as a pastor—she had been lectured like a cottager, scolded like a child, talked to like a heathen. But the sun beginning to creep around among the roses and honeysuckles, their retreat began, like their conversation, to grow warm, and the curate rose to take his leave. They walked down the path together. "May I have a rose?" he asked, as they passed a cluster of bright buds.

"Certainly:" but she neither stopped nor aided him to gather one.

He plucked the flower himself, at the same time presenting one to her.

"Thank you," was the cool acceptance; "will you stay to luncheon?" she asked, as they entered the house.

"You must excuse me this morning, I have not yet been to the schools. Good-by. Marion, your bird sings nicely, he is the prime pet, I suppose?"

"No, there is my real favorite, Mr. Lisle, my spoiled child," and Marion pointed to her large gray cat, sunning himself on the lawn. "Come here, Tyrza."

Tyrza loved his little mistress, but he loved sunshine better, so he blinked his green eyes and stayed where he was.

"There, Mr. Lisle, what could I do with children, when even my cat is disobedient to me?"

"You are not going to try, Marion," replied her

mother, very quickly. "I have told Mr. Lisle that you have enough to do, for the present, in your studies."

Marion's countenance fell, but she stole a glance at a pair of quiet eyes, which said as plainly as eyes could speak, "Patience, little Golden-hair."

So Mr. Lisle departed to the village school, with its motley children and sleepy hum; Mrs. Howard went up stairs to get over her discomfiture as she best might, while Marion sat in the summer-house with her needle-work and pussy, and thought of India and Edward far away.

CHAPTER III.

IT was on the morning of the following day the postman handed Marion a letter over the railing of the little garden, where she was bustling about in her own fashion, tying, sticking, arranging and watering. Passing it to her mother through the open window, she continued her work, every now and then interrupted by Tyrza, who was amusing himself with springing out, tiger fashion, on his mistress' string, and then rolling over it in the exuberance of his feline joy.

"You are a nuisance, Tyrza, really you are!" was however, the only rebuke he met with, as half a dozen yards of the ball lay unwound on the path.

"Marion, come here a minute," was the summons from the window; and Marion jumped up with so much alacrity, that Tyrza pretended to be startled, and scuttled off under a box-tree.

Mrs. Howard, in the prettiest of little caps, and the neatest of morning dresses, was seated at the breakfast table, not yet cleared, with the letter open in her hand, which she handed to her little daughter. It ran thus:

"My Dear Friend:

You know it has been a promise, even when our home was smoky, dirty Manchester, that you should visit us. While located there, however, I could never find it in my heart to urge you to leave your dear little retreat, much as I often longed for your society. You know this is not the language of compliment, for, linked as you are with my earliest recollections, I always look upon you, after my husband, children and brother (all that are left me now), as my nearest and dearest friend on earth. You are surprised, I can well imagine, that we have not been over to see you, considering that we have been here since March; but there is so much to be done in settling and arranging such a large household as mine really is now, that I could not manage it, nor did I wish you to come here until I could entertain you, and give you my time as I could wish. All is now straight; when may we expect you, not for a day or two, but for a long, long visit, to make amends for our weary separation? Only tell us the day you will be ready, and my husband will fetch you and dear little Marion, whom I long to see; and heartily, most heartily, dearest Margaret, shall we welcome you to the Cedars.

Mary Darrell."

"Mamma, how delightful! when will you go?" cried Marion, whose eyes were sparkling with rapture.

"Really, my dear child, I can hardly say. There are so many things to attend to, that I cannot see

how I can possibly accept this invitation just now. Indeed, it is not improbable that I may have to go up to London next week; for, in consequence of poor Captain Thompson's death, who was the last remaining executor of your papa's will, it is very likely I shall be wanted there; and business, you know, must stand before everything."

"Of course it must," replied Marion, trying not to look disappointed.

"How would you like to go without me?"

"O, not at all, mamma, let me stay with you."

"Spoiled child!" said her mother, drawing her to her, and kissing her. "Well, we need not trouble ourselves about it now, as I shall not answer the letter till this evening; meantime I will think it over, and see what will be best for us to do. Now run back to your gardening."

Marion thought a great deal about the Cedars, but no more was said upon the subject during the day, which happened to be rather a busy one for Mrs. Howard, and it was with a palpitating heart that the little girl saw her mamma seat herself at her desk in the evening.

"Marion, come here."

Marion obeyed, and marched up to the little table to hear sentence pronounced.

"No, my dear child, I have considered the matter well, and we must be reasonable, you know. I see I must go to London, and it would make me very uneasy, all the time of my stay there, to know that you were here by yourself, with no one to keep you company but Turner."

"But cannot I go with you? I always do," pleaded Marion.

"No, my dear; this time your aunts are out of town, and I shall have to be poor Mrs. Thompson's guest; and even if she had given you an invitation, which she has not, the house of mourning would be a dull scene for your midsummer holidays. I think, therefore, if Mrs. Darrell will kindly take charge of you, I should like you to go to her."

"Very well, mamma. I dare say I shall be very happy, but you know I have never been anywhere without you, and I am afraid I shall feel strange. Tell me about Mrs. Darrell: what is she like? Have you known her long?"

"She and Mr. Darrell are, I think I may say, Marion, the two nicest people I ever knew, and when I saw their children, which was, however, many years ago, when they were quite little, they bade fair to be as good as their parents; at any rate they have, I know, been well brought up. The only peculiarity about the family is that they are Catholics. This is not surprising in Mrs. Darrell, who is an Irishwoman, but I can never understand why her husband should be one, there seems to me something so un-English in a Catholic."

"Roman Catholic, you must say, mamma," laughed Marion. "Mr. Lisle says we are Catholics!"

"Ah, Mr. Lisle says a great many things," replied Mrs. Howard, angrily.

Poor little Marion looked astounded.

"Well, it does not much matter, Catholics or

Roman Catholics, they are very nice and very good people. When I first knew Mrs. Darrell she was a girl at school. You have heard me speak of Mary St. Ledger, and her wild tricks?"

"Yes, very often; but I did not know that she was the same as Mrs. Darrell, or that she was not a Protestant."

"With regard to her religion, school girls seldom trouble themselves much about that. She belonged to an old Irish family, who prided themselves as much on their popery as their pedigree, thouhg one was pretty nearly as inexplicable to me as the other."

"Did you ever try to make her a Protestant?"

"I? Marion, what a notion! No such an idea ever came into my head; and if it had, I should have been puzzled where to begin; for, however thoughtless we Protestant girls may have been, Mary St. Ledger certainly had her religion at her fingers' ends, and could have silenced any one of us in two minutes."

"Where were you at school with her, mamma?"

"In Paris; we were there together for two years."

"Used you ever go to the Catholic Church with her?"

"Not with her particularly, but on great days we English girls used to go with the school; but I could never make much of the services."

"Did you ever ask her what they meant?"

"Not that I remember. Although I was young at the time, I was old enough to see the folly of worshipping God with so much show and nonsense.

I had been told to take care that they did not make a Catholic of me, but there was no occasion for the warning. As I never spoke to Mary of her religion, except to ridicule it, she was not likely to make it a theme of conversation. In everything else we two were very great friends, and in after years, on our return to England, circumstances cemented us more closely. Mr. St. Ledger's family, as well as my own, lived in London, so that Mary and I frequently interchanged visits. It was at a ball given by Mr. St. Ledger, when his daughter came of age, that I first met your papa. Mary was already engaged to Mr. Darrell, and our weddings took place within a month of each other. As I had been married five years before you were born, her children were all rather older than you. When you were a year old, they went to settle in Manchester, and except once, about four years ago, and then only for a few hours at your aunt's, I have never seen them since. I know you will like them both, and I am quite certain Mrs. Darrell will do all in her power to make you happy."

And so a letter was written, explaining how matters stood; and by an answer, received the next day, it was arranged that Marion should be brought the following week, and remain Mrs. Darrell's guest during her mother's absence.

It was again Sunday, and again came the usual Sunday routine. Marion rose at eight, said her prayers, read her chapter, and then walked around and around the garden till breakfast time. After breakfast, came another walk up and down the path

with solemn old Baxter in her hand, and after this the morning service in the little gray church with a very "ponderous sermon" by Dr. Stebbing, while the hour between church time and dinner was spent in dressing and redressing her mother's beautiful long hair. But with the afternoon came the time that poor little Marion found so weary, and yet it was better to-day than it had been the Sunday before, for Miss Leicester did not come, and the little girl and her mother had it all to themselves. Mrs. Howard was soon asleep, not so Marion. She read the Pilgrim's Progress and the Holy War till she was tired, and littered her Sunday library about in all directions, in the vain hope of finding something fresh. Naughty child! how lovingly she glanced at her drawing-case and paint-box, at the piano, and the long rows of "Chambers' Words," not half read through. "Now, if it were not Sunday," she began, but checked herself immediately. The recollection of Mr. Lisle's grave look, in answer to her complaint that "Sunday was a dull day," flitted across her mind. This brought with it a thought that had occupied her not a little during the last few days. "Why is mamma so vexed with Mr. Lisle? I was afraid she would be angry at the idea of my teaching in the Sunday-school, but I wish very much she would have let me do something, for I am so dull like this. This time next week I suppose I shall not be here."

A host of anticipations here somewhat distracted her awhile, and walking out again into the garden she seated herself with Tyrza on the little bench,

the scene of Mrs. Howard's conversation with her spiritual pastor. "Pussy," she exclaimed at length, growing tired of her musings, "cats must be very happy, I should think, to be allowed to do what they like on Sundays. God made you as well as me, and I wonder why he lets you catch mice and frisk about and purr, while I cannot do anything. I suppose it is because you have no soul; is that the reason, should you think, little pussy? I wonder what people do in heaven," she continued, after a pause; "Dr. Stebbing says it will be an eternal Sabbath. Dear me, how strange! I am sure it must be something very different to this, or many people would not be happy there at all."

At this moment she caught sight of old Turner, who, in her Sunday gown, white apron, and quaint old fashioned cap, with its bow of black ribbons on the top, was walking slowly down to her.

"O, nursey, I am so glad you have come! I thought you had gone out, and I want some one to talk to."

The old woman smiled. "Well, deary, it's not much you'll get by talking to the likes of me."

"Nursey, do you like Sunday?"

"Bless you, Miss Marion, of course I do; isn't it the Lord's day?"

"Yes, but for all that, don't you sometimes get tired of it?"

"No, never, Miss Marion, it's all too short for me."

"What do you do to amuse yourself, then, all the afternoon and evening?"

"I read my Bible, my dear, and sometimes I think

about my poor old husband, and how he and me used to sit together in the old times, and how we shall be together again some day, in the Lord's good time, in heaven."

"Nursey, what do you think heaven is like?"

"A beautiful, bright place, child, where the angels are flying about singing, and where we shall always be together all dressed in white, with golden crowns on our heads, and playing hymns on golden harps forever."

"Don't you think, nursey, at least, don't you think, perhaps—people will get tired of doing this always?"

"Of course not; it isn't right to talk like that, Miss Marion. But," added the woman, tenderly, seeing Marion's abashed look, "come here, and I will tell you what I think. We oughtn't to worret ourselves any way about it; heaven, perhaps, is something very different to that; we can't tell, but we know it is as beautiful as God Almighty can make it, and, any rate, that ought to satisfy us."

"Yes," returned the child, thoughtful, "if he has made this world so beautiful, heaven must be something better, I see. But, nursey, I do not fancy it as you do."

"Never mind, child, what you do fancy, as long as you try to get there, by putting your trust in your Saviour."

"Nursey, there is one thing that always puzzles me, and that is, how very good and clever people can have just the same happiness as those who are only pretty good, or who know very little."

"Well, I'll tell you, Miss Marion, a thing as has sometimes come into my head. If you fill a half-pint pot up to the rim, it can't hold no more, nor a quart neither. If you was to try to pour a quart of water into the little measure, it couldn't hold it, because, don't you see, it wouldn't be in its nature; but a half a pint of water would leave a very big gap in the quart pot. This is how I think it is in heaven. St. Paul is the quart pot. I perhaps, am the half pint. The glory God will give to him will be more than I could bear, while my glory in heaven will be enough for the likes of me, but hardly more p'raps than St. Paul had here."

"O, Turner, what a funny notion!" exclaimed Marion, laughing heartily, while the old woman joined her; "but I am sure it is very true. Even Mr. Lisle never said anything better than that in his sermons."

"Mr. Lisle! the Lord love his sweet face!"

"He is very good, isn't he, Nursey?"

"As good as gold!" replied the old woman, enthusiastically. "He's been here only two years, but the people all about love him as much as if he had been born and bred among them."

"Do you know where he came from?" asked Marion.

"From Scotland. This was the first ministry he was ever in. He was ordained, so I am told, only a month before he came here. His father and mother have been dead some time, and I heard some one say as he has no near relation but one sister married, and that's all I know about him."

"Is he rich, should you think?"

"They say he has only got what he gets for being here; but howsomever he does more with the little he's got, than some people do with thousands on thousands. There's more than one old man and woman in the place as would be on the parish, if it wasn't for him. The Lord love him, I say."

At this moment the summons arrived to tea, and with a kiss on the old nurse's withered cheek, Marion ran quickly into the house.

Mrs. Howard did not go to church, but stayed at home to write letters instead. Again Marion started on her quiet walk up the sunny street, again the villagers lingered on the side-paths, and by their doors. Was it that nature's holiday dress was gayer, or was it that the cloud of distrust had cleared away since her conversation with Mr. Lisle? However it may have been, Marion felt very happy, and returned each friendly greeting with her own bright smile. Again Bill Rogers met her.

"Do you think you could get me a few more primrose roots this week?" she asked, gently.

Bill looked up, the repulse of last Sunday evening was neither forgiven nor forgotten, but the bright eyes were too much for him.

"Lots on 'em, Miss."

"I am so glad; how is your mother?"

"Much about the same," answered the boy. "She'll never be much better, they say," and, uncouth as he was, Marion saw something very like a wet eyelash.

"Will you give her this?" asked Marion, taking sixpence from her little purse. "Good evening."

Again Bill stood and looked after her.

"Miss Howard!"

Marion stopped.

"Would you like a nest of young linnets?"

"O, no, no! indeed I would not!" replied Marion, most emphatically; "please Bill, don't rob the poor little things of their young ones for me. It is so very cruel!"

Bill grinned, not knowing what else to do.

"No; get me the flower roots, if you can, but not the birds. Are you going to church?"

"No, I can't say as I be," replied the boy; "I was there this morning, and at school this afternoon, and I think that's enough for a lad as works hard all the week. Some folks don't seem to think so though, but I cannot help that."

Marion glanced at the bronzed and freckled face, and toil-worn hands of the plough-boy. "He is right," was the judgment of the warm little heart.

Mr. Lisle was to take his ease, it seemed, to-day, for once again Dr. Stebbing mounted the pulpit, and the result, as usual, was a very dry sermon, extremely uninteresting to Marion, who thought more of the Cedars during its delivery, than justification by faith. On leaving the church she was joined by the rector's wife, and the reverend gentleman himself soon after overtaking them, they all three walked together towards the rectory.

Marion could not have said why, but she always

felt a vast amount of awe in the presence of Dr. Stebbing. It was not his face, which was good-humor personified, not his antique dress, nor his rather blunt manner, but there was something in the *tout ensemble* that always made her feel nervous.

"It is such a lovely evening, will you not come in and walk a little with us around the garden?" asked Mrs. Stebbing. "Mamma will hardly expect you yet."

"Do, my child," said the rector, kindly.

Marion entered the door which he held open, and having spent some time in inspecting the cabinets and curiosities, ranged around the old-fashioned library, the little party adjourned to the garden. It was very pleasant; the evening was so calm and still, with the sun setting amid a gorgeous pile of blood-red clouds, stretching from one side of the horizon to the other. The mill-stream, with which the rectory garden, like their own, was bounded, flowed lazily on, unruffled save by the flutter, now and then, of a minnow below, or the kiss of a dragon above. Crowds of merry gnats danced around, bees hummed their homeward flight, and birds twittered in the trees above. The gossamer, too, spun their silken toil, the frog croaked in the meadow, the grasshopper chirped at their feet. Everything lay hushed in a silent dreamy beauty, now broken by the voices of our friends, as they walked backwards and forwards by the side of the stream. Marion's share in the conversation was however extremely limited, for notwithstanding all

the efforts of her host and hostess to make her feel at home with them, all they could get from her were monosyllables in reply. A step on the gravel made them turn their heads, and Mr. Lisle joined them.

"Here, Mr. Lisle," exclaimed the rector, after a few minutes' conversation on parish matters, "see if you can make this young lady talk; she is wonderfully silent with us. Try what your magic words can do."

"What is the matter, Marion?" asked the curate, pulling one of her long curls, as the rector and his wife turned off down a side path.

"Nothing at all, Mr. Lisle; but really, there has been nothing for me to say. I answered all the questions I was asked."

"But you manage to chat very merrily sometimes, don't you?"

"Yes, when I have anything to say; but people should not talk for the sake of talking, should they?"

"Well, Marion, it depends. Sometimes, to talk for talking sake is a great kindness, but it is certain more often a great folly, as in the case of half the small-talk we are frequently doomed to listen to."

"Small-talk. What is that?"

"It is the uttering of a great many words, without any aim but that of simply passing the time God has given to improve. I have heard it spoken of as an acquisition to a person's style, that he or she had plenty of small-talk at command;

but for myself, I have generally found such people more wearisome than anything else one meets with in society. I do think, however, that a man or woman with real conversational powers is a social treasure, to be highly prized for its rarity."

"I would rather be always silent, than talk about nothing."

"Well decided!" laughed the clergyman. "Are not those clouds beautiful?" he asked, pointing to the west. "Might not one almost imagine it was a little glimpse of heaven shining through, to encourage us?"

"I hope it will be fine to-morrow for my journey. Do you know I am going away?"

"No; where are you going, and for how long?"

"I do not know for how long, but we have received an invitation from Mrs. Darrell, a very old friend of mamma's. Mr. Darrell has just bought an estate at Harleyford, called the Cedars, do you know it?"

"Yes, Harleyford is about nine miles from here, and a nice, clean, brisk little town it is. Let me see—the Cedars. Surely I have heard something about that house."

"It is rather an old one, I believe, and takes its name from two beautiful cedar trees on the lawn at the back."

"The Cedars—Darrell," continued the curate, thoughtfully; "to be sure, I remember; he bought the property last March; but, Marion, somebody told me they were Romanists!"

"So they are; won't it be strange?"

"Strange! child, you do not mean to say you are going!"

"Yes, I am really, to-morrow."

"What! to stay in the house of a Romanist family at your tender age, and with your imagination?"

"Why, Mr. Lisle, what harm will it do me? Do tell me what Catholics are, for I really do not know."

"Roman Catholics!" said the pastor, crossly. "What are they?—as people, they may be very well, but their religion!"

"Is what?" asked the child, nervously.

"Is a gigantic lie. Were it only the thing of mummery and buffoonery it appears at first sight, it would not mislead bright spirits, as it has done, and is still doing. You are too young to understand all its mighty pretensions, claiming, as it does, infallibility and authority direct from God, or the intense presumption that says to every other religion and sect upon earth, 'I am right, and you are wrong.' Marion, it is antichrist, it is the Babylon denounced in the Revelations, it is the masterpiece of Satan! In the place of Christ, of that Saviour who died for them, they place the Virgin Mary, and where they pray once to God, they pray many times to her. And no wonder! Why should they look to Heaven for pardon, when the words of a priest, laughing in his sleeve at their folly, can forgive their sins? or why look to the blood of a Saviour for redemption, when a few

penances here, and a little purgatory hereafter, is a sufficient atonement for the blackest crimes? Ah! little one, little one, your mother must indeed have confidence in her maternal influence ere she trusts you in such an atmosphere as this. O, Marion! keep as close to her as possible, and away, as much as you can in common politeness, from even the children, should there be any. Should you get to love them, their priest, by an influence they dare not resist, will force them to wrest this very innocence of your heart to your eternal ruin. The more amiable Romanists appear, the more they are to be shunned; for, depend upon it, Satan baits his hooks with the morsels sweetest to human nature. Believe me, I do not say all this in any uncharitable spirit, but the danger is imminent, and little Golden-hair is dear to us all. But keep near mamma, and I pray all may be well."

"Mr. Lisle, I am going alone!" cried Marion, pale with excitement.

"Then may God have mercy on you!" exclaimed the curate.

There was a dead silence. The child trembled. Mr. Lisle groaned.

"Marion," he said at length, "you are going among all these dangers; do you really think their blandishments will have no power to turn your young heart from God?"

"No, I am sure they will not."

"Beware of presumption," he replied, sternly. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

"I mean that, I really do."

"Well, then, my child, I commend you to God. Now, look here," he added, drawing a small book from his pocket, "this has been my companion for some years now; it once belonged to a friend that I shall never see again. One who—well, never mind, I shall be quite upset if I begin upon that. Now, promise me, whenever you see anything wrong, or, worse still, anything that appears to you inviting, to take this out and read a chapter, or if you have not time for that, a few lines. Then you will be safe, for no girl ever read her Bible and became a Romanist. But come, it is getting chilly, or you will take cold."

They walked towards the house as he spoke, and found the doctor and Mrs. Stebbing at the door.

"And has our little friend found her tongue?" asked the good-humored rector, seizing her by the chin. "Why, what's the matter, Lisle?" he asked, that gentleman's vexation being plainly visible.

"I have been grieved that Miss Howard is going to visit a Roman Catholic family, and that Mrs. Howard will be unable to accompany her."

"Whew!" whistled the doctor. "Dangerous work that."

"How inconsiderate!" whispered Mrs. Stebbing, aside to the curate.

"Don't you be turning Papist!" cried the rector, "or you shall not come back into my parish, where there is not one but poor O'Leary, the cobbler. As for him though, he is a perfect pattern of religious zeal. Why, that man walks over to Harley-

ford and back every Sunday to church! I wonder which of our parishioners would do that, Lisle, eh? Eighteen miles every Sunday! Sunshine, rain, snow, or hail, he never misses, unless he is ill."

"I have always heard it said that we might do well in copying the zeal of the Roman Catholics in their religion," observed his wife.

"How fast they are increasing!" exclaimed the rector. "I cannot understand it."

"And growing bolder every day," said Mr. Lisle; "but, no wonder, with the encouragement they get. Look at their churches and convents!"

"What! are there convents in England?" asked Marion, astonished.

"To be sure there are," replied the rector.

"With monks and nuns inside, like those we read of hundreds of years ago?" continued Marion.

"Yes, just the same," said Mr. Lisle. "It is one of Popery's proudest vaunts that she never changes. What she is now, she was in the time of Mary and Catharine de Medicis. The lion's nature is the same, whether chained, or ranging in his native woods."

"They were very dreadful then," said Marion. "They say Queen Mary burnt even children and little babies. What a dreadful woman she must have been!"

"Stop, my child!" exclaimed the rector, "we must make allowance for the times, which were very barbarous. I believe Mary to have been a bigoted, fanatical woman, but not the demon incarnate most historians paint her."

"But if the Catholic religion teaches people such

dreadful things," said Marion, "for I remember now that somebody once told me that they even worship images, why does not God put a stop to it? Why does He let them increase?"

"Almost as puzzling a question," exclaimed Doctor Stebbing, laughing, "as when Friday asked Robinson Crusoe, 'Why God no kill de devil?' I do not know, my love; for purposes we cannot fathom. But we must not be uncharitable in talking of even what we know to be wrong; Roman Catholics do not worship images, they only reverence them with the same species of affection that we show to earthly things. In the same spirit exactly, that you would kiss and fondle a portrait of your poor papa, the Romanist kisses his little crucifix, and as the peers of the realm bow even to the vacant throne of their sovereign, when she herself is absent, so do Catholics bow to the images of their saints, absent from earth."

"I do believe you are a little bit of a Papist yourself, John," whispered his wife, while Mr. Lisle look decidedly blank.

"No, not at all," laughed the good-natured doctor, "but 'fair play's a jewel;' and I must say, the Catholics seldom get it from us. For instance, how often do we hear people say that they have expunged the second commandment altogether, finding it too hard upon their so-called idolatry."

"Where is it, then, if they have not done so?" asked the curate.

"Where it ought to be; in their prayer-books, and books of instruction."

"Pardon me, Dr. Stebbing!"

"Pardon me, Mr. Lisle, but I know what I am talking about. You must remember that the Bible did not stand originally as we have it now, divided into chapters and verses. Just look at the commandments as they stand in the twentieth chapter of Exodus; imagine them from beginning to end without division, and see if you would not have considered the matter of our first and second commandments as fitly suited to form the subject of one commandment. This arrangement the Catholic Church has adopted; and, though, of course it matters little how you divide them, provided you get the whole sum and substance of the decalogue, I certainly think her division is the more perfect of the two. But you are quite under a delusion if you imagine that anything has been expunged from this version. With the exception of this difference, and a trifling deviation in the translation, the Protestant and Catholic tables of commandments are alike."

"But, believe me, Doctor Stebbing, that I have seen Roman catechisms in which the second commandment has been left out," triumphantly objected Mr. Lisle.

"And I have seen Protestant catechisms in which the commandments ran thus:

'Thou shalt have none other Gods but me,
Unto no idol bow the knee,
Take not the name of God in vain,
Do not the Sabbath day profane,' &c.

Now, will you tell me that that is the decalogue as delivered from Mount Sinai?"

"Of course not; but those catechisms were only for young children, and so only the substance of each commandment is given."

"And so were the Catholic catechisms that you saw for young children. And as only the commencement of each commandment is given, it naturally follows that in such catechisms a great portion of what we call the second commandment is left out. If, however, you should happen to come across the Douay catechism, and others authorized to be taught in Catholic schools, you will find the first commandment to the following effect:

"'I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven thing, nor the likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, nor of those things which are in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore them nor serve them: I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and keep my commandments.' Depend upon it, there is quite enough to reprehend in their version of graver doctrines, without descending to hair-splitting and unworthy quibbles."

Much as Marion was interested in the conversation, she felt that her mamma would be growing

uneasy at her absence, and hastened to bid good-night to the doctor and his good little wife. Mr. Lisle accompanied her, not sorry to take leave of his rector, whose opinions, for the first time, he felt strongly inclined to censure.

"Good night, Marion," said he, holding out his hand at the little gate. "Remember!"

The child tripped into the house, and after supper related the conversation to her mother; nor did she omit Mr. Lisle's disapprobation of the proposed visit.

"I had better send my keys around to Mr. Lisle, and ask him to come and take the entire charge of my affairs," exclaimed the lady, reddening with anger. "You may safely go, my child, where your mother sends." Marion crept into her arms and nestled in her motherly embrace, and, reassured that she was not going into the nest of dragons she had begun to dread, went to bed radiant with anticipation. "But, I will keep my promise," she murmured, as she sank to sleep with the little black book under her pillow.

CHAPTER IV.

THE sun shone brightly from an unclouded sky as Marion sprang out of bed early the next morning, awakened by the rural concerts of cows, rooks, cooks and bees, that came wafted through the open window, mingled with the perfume of summer flowers and new-mown hay. Had it not been for the one dull thought of leaving mamma, it would have been a morning of unmixed pleasure to our little girl, as she ran backwards and forwards, assisting her mother in arranging and packing her little fairy-like wardrobe of summer dresses. And when it was all finished, and the two little trunks were corded and carried down stairs, how very gladly Marion would have gone over all again.

"You will, of course, write to me often, Marion," said her mother.

"Yes, mamma, very often; and you will come yourself and fetch me, will you not?"

"If I can. Mrs. Darrell will, I know, see that you go to the Protestant church on Sundays. By-the-by, I expect you will find the Sunday rather a strange day to you. I do not know how Catholics

spend it in England, but in Paris it seems to me very like a week day. I quite forget how the St. Ledgers spent it in England; it may be that I never passed one with them."

"May I just go to church with them once, if they ask me, to see what it is like?"

"Certainly, my dear; go to your own church in the morning, and then you may go with them whenever you like. I have never been into a Catholic chapel here, but I suppose it is much the same thing as in France. I have more confidence in you and them, than Mr. Lisle seems to have in any of us, and it would be very dull for you to stay at home by yourself. Of course, however, my little girl will not forget to keep the Sabbath day holy, whatever she may see others do."

"O, no, mamma! If I see anything you would not like, I will read, or do something else. I will try and set them an example," and Marion looked very demure. "Now, I think I am ready," she exclaimed, as her mother put the finishing touch to her little daughter's toilette, by twisting one of the long bright curls around her finger; "let us go down stairs and have a nice talk until Mr. Darrell comes."

"Hark!" said Mrs. Howard, and Marion's heart went pit-a-pat, as the roll of a vehicle ceased at the gate.

"Mamma, it is Mr. Darrell!" she exclaimed, as from the window she caught sight of a tall figure walking up the path.

"Yes, it is Mr. Darrell," repeated the widow,

almost profoundly, "and not much changed." A shadow passed over her face, for, notwithstanding her pleasure in meeting him, he brought back old times very vividly. A minute more, and they were all three in the parlor.

"Mary is dreadfully disappointed that you are not coming too," said Mr. Darrell, "and so are we all; but I must say, I think you are doing right in going up to London at this particular juncture of your affairs. As for Edith and Emily, they are on the tiptoe of expectation, looking out for our little friend here. I thought of first sending Joe for her, with Tom to drive them, for I am literally obliged to make hay while the sun shines, but I thought my legal experience might be of some use to you, so I drove over in the dog-cart for her myself."

Here followed some business conversation between the two elders, about as uninteresting to our readers as it was to Marion, who ran out to order the luncheon.

"I wonder what a dog-cart is?" she mused, and stopped to take a look at the vehicle; but the varnished sides and plated harness flashing in the sun, fully satisfied her scrutiny. "So that is a dog-cart; what a funny name for such a handsome thing!"

Lunch was soon dispatched, for Mr. Darrell, to use his own expression, "never let the grass grow under his feet," and he felt that just now his haymakers required a master's eye. And so little Golden-hair was mounted on the dog-cart, where she felt very high, and rather frightened,

too, as Black Prince pranced till his harness jingled all over; but she swallowed some salt tears, that would come, and tried to smile at her mother, who stood kissing her hand at the gate. Then off they rolled as fast as Black Prince could carry them. For some minutes Mr. Darrell left her to herself, and talked to Tom over his shoulder about the farms and estates through which the turnpike led. But the little head beside him was soon lifted up, like a daisy after a shower of rain; and, quite at home with her new friend, Marion forgot her tears in the full tide of chatter, and in less than an hour and a half they stopped at the lodge of the "Cedars."

It was a charming residence, along the steep carriage drive of which Mr. Darrell and his little companion passed slowly. For some distance, after leaving the lodge, the path lay between broad flower beds, planted with beautiful shrubs and flowering annuals; while, peeping between the trees of the shrubberies, green park-like meadows stretched far away on all sides. After a time the view widened, and the drive wound past a lawn, interspersed with parterres gay with flowers. The house, an old-fashioned building of red brick, was shaded by its patriarchal cedars, while at the back, rising to the very summit of the hill, towered the magnificent wood.

A warm, motherly embrace welcomed little Marion. "My darling, I am so glad to see you,"

and the child looked up confidently in the sweet strange eyes gazing upon her. All that Mrs. Howard had loved in the Irish school girl, clung to her still. Time had tempered her faults, ripened her intellect, changed her name, but in all else, with the same impulsive, gushing temperament, the mistress of the Cedars was Mary St. Ledger still.

"Where are the girls?" asked Mrs. Darrell, looking around.

An instant afterwards the door flew open, and a glad little spirit seized Marion by the hand. "How late you are? we have been watching for you; why didn't you come sooner? Naughty little thing!" and she threw her arms around her new friend's neck, who, all unused as she was to children, stood almost aghast at this most lively salutation.

"Emily, my love, you must be more gentle; you are quite frightening Marion. Remember, she has no brothers nor sisters, and will have to get used to such a wild little girl as you. You are really not half polite enough."

Emily drew a little back. "Are you afraid of me?" she asked, with her mother's roguish twinkle in her eye.

"No, not at all," replied Marion, smiling, "I was only a little startled."

"Come up stairs, then, and take off your things; don't you think you will be very happy here with us all? We are going to make hay this afternoon, and Joe says you are to have his pony every day, as long as you are here," she added all in a breath, as they passed along a broad oak passage,

at the top of the stairs. "What a dear little thing you are!" she added; "what pretty long curls you have; do you know what you put me in mind of when you smile?"

"No,—of what?" asked Marion, laughing.

"Of sunshine! I don't know why, but somehow the word sunshine comes into my head when I look at you. Do you think you will like me?"

"I am sure I shall."

"Well, I think you will, just a little, but you will like Edith better."

"Who is Edith?"

"Don't you know? Why, my twin sister; everybody likes her, and so they ought, she is so good, and not at all wild, like me. I don't mean to be wild, you know, but somehow I cannot help it. Sometimes I feel as if I could laugh, and dance, and sing all day. This is to be your room, now come and see Edith's and mine; they lead into each other, so that we are never lonely."

Fit emblem of the sweet twin sisters were the two little chambers to which her guide conducted Marion, chattering all the way. Draped with pure white muslin, with blue carpet and paper, and clustering roses peeping in at each window, Marion thought she had never seen anything half so pretty. But that which riveted her attention was a table covered with white, placed in a smaller recess in Edith's room, on which stood the image of a queen, surrounded with flowers and tapers. High above it was suspended a large image of Christ crucified, and the figure of an angel on either side. The

cloth was richly trimmed with lace, and a small lamp burned before the statue.

"What is that?" inquired Marion.

"What?" asked her companion, glad of some new topic of conversation.

Marion pointed to the table in question,

"This is our altar, where Edie and I say our prayers."

"Do you?" said Marion.

"Yes, come and look at it. Did you never see one before? See, this is an image of our Lady, and there is our Blessed Lord upon the cross."

Both children looked very grave.

"And what are those?" asked Marion, pointing to a string of beads, suspended from a nail.

"That is my rosary."

"What do you do with it?"

"I will explain that to you another time, because dinner will soon be ready now. I say some of my prayers with it."

"How strange!" and Marion laid her hand on the little black book in her pocket.

"Did you never know any Catholic before?"

"Never," said Marion.

"O, then, I dare say you think we are funny people, and worship images and all that sort of thing?"

"No, I don't; Dr. Stebbing told me last night that you only reverenced them."

"Did he? Well, all Protestants don't think that. Father Stirling says that some people think we really pray to our crucifixes."

"What a number you have!" said Marion, glancing around.

"Because we like to think of Almighty God and all He suffered, whichever way we look. Don't you?"

'I don't know; not always—not when I am merry, you know."

"But we ought to like it even then, to be sure that we don't get too merry, and do anything wrong."

They went back to the room where Marion had taken off her things. "See, here is a crucifix at the head of this bed, too. If you sleep here, you will not mind its being there?"

"I would rather not have it," replied Marion. "Our clergyman, Mr. Lisle, says it is very wrong to represent Christ in His humiliation, so I don't much like looking at it."

"I don't understand that," said her little friend; "but if you don't like it, I will take it away;" and getting a chair, she reached it down, and, kissing it reverently, laid it gently in a drawer.

That kiss was a simple action, but it touched her companion. It was something human and tender, and yet it was showing homage to God. A step along the corridor made them turn, and Edith Darrell joined them. Her greeting was quiet, but affectionate, for in everything were the twin sisters opposite to each other. Emily was a blonde, bright and beautiful, pure as wax, with fair hair and laughing eyes, who reminded me, in her perpetual change and merriment, of

the dashing mountain torrent; while Edith, the brunette, the principal charm of whose countenance was the pensive beauty of her large dark eyes, seemed like a tranquil lake, ever reflecting the silent heaven above. And truly, most truly, were the things of heaven reflected in that quiet spirit, shining forth perpetually in a hundred silent ways. Interesting at first sight, even by the side of the fascinating little Emily, Edith, when known, was the general favorite. Unpretending, generous, and self-denying, her very meekness was the charm that held all hearts captive with a magic chain, and gave her the preëminence over her equally generous, but high-spirited, and sometimes petulant, little sister.

"Where have you been?" asked the latter, half reproachfully. "Marion has been here such a time."

"I would not have been out for the world, but I went to meet them. I am sorry we missed you," she added, turning to Marion, and taking her hand, while the smile that lit every feature was as genuine as the little heart within.

"Which way did you go?" asked her sister.

"Towards Harleyford."

"Past the church? O, I know now! O, Marion! she is such a little saint! Come, confess you went into church, and forgot all about Marion, papa, and everything else."

"Emily, what a teasing child you are."

"It is all very fine, Miss Edie, but you know very well that I am right."

"Yes, I did go in, of course, just for one minute or two; but I cannot think how wheels could have passed without my hearing them, for everything was so still, and I was listening all the time."

"Your guardian angel made them pass silently, to save you from distractions, I suppose," said Emily.

Marion looked, but said nothing. The dinner-bell rang, and she was soon so busily engaged in discussing the good things provided, that altars and guardian angels were forgotten.

"What shall we do now?" asked the mercurial little Emily, when the cloth had been removed, and grace said with a certain sign, that made poor Marion feel very uncomfortable.

"Go into the hayfields, I think," said Mrs. Darrell. "Run and get your hats on as quickly as you can, for they are carting now, and an empty wagon is just going back to the field; so you can all ride in it."

Although Marion had lived in the country all her life, she had very little of the country girl about her; Mrs. Howard had kept her so exclusively to herself, that anything like companionship with young people was new to her, and especially those amusements in which gregarious youngsters find such exquisite delight, but from which the solitary child is naturally excluded. The ride to the hayfield, therefore, in the jolting, jogging wagon, was as delightful to her as to her companions, whose experience of life in the cotton

metropolis had given them a keen relish for the country and its pleasures. What a picture it was to see them all holding on by the side of the wagon, as old Dobbin broke into a clumsy run, with his laughing, screaming freight behind him! How the carter enjoyed it too, as one by one they slipped down to the bottom of the cart, rolling about like so many little landsmen in a gale at sea. And then the romp they had when they actually arrived in the hayfield, how they smothered brother Joe, and old Jack, the Newfoundland dog, who had come up in the cart with them, and who always pushed his big good-humored head out just when he was least expected, and then, wriggling out of the hole, walked off with a mountain load of hay upon his broad, curly back. Never had Marion had such fun, never had the lower croft meadow echoed so many peals of laughter. Never were haymakers so helped and bothered, for the execution the little folks did with rakes and pitchforks was quite exemplary, or would have been, had they not tumbled the cocks over again in romping, as soon as they had built them.

But even haymaking grows warm work under a June sun, so Joe made them a sofa of hay, "*sub tegmine fagi*," as he phrased it, and then rode home on the top of the next wagon load, promising to see about something good in the shape of what he denominated bever.

"Joe is very good-natured," said Marion, when at last they had all arranged themselves, Eastern

fashion, on their rustic divan, and were ready for a chat.

"O, he's a dear old fellow!" exclaimed Emily, enthusiastically.

"Does he go to school?"

"He has not been anywhere since we left Manchester; but he is going to college in September. He has a holiday for the haymaking, but he generally studies very hard with papa. Mamma does not know yet what we girls are going to do, for Miss Horton, our governess, who has taught us up till now, is going to be married."

"I think we shall go to the convent Father Stirling was telling mamma about, after the holidays," said Edith.

"To the convent! What for?" asked Marion.

"To learn."

"Why, do they teach in convents?"

"Yes, in some," said Edith. "What did you think they did?"

"Do tell us, Marion, what you think nuns are like?" exclaimed Emily, sitting suddenly upright, and looking very mischievous.

"Really, I don't know," replied Marion. "I never saw one in my life. They are all dressed in black, are they not?"

"Some are; well, what do you think they do all day?"

"I don't know exactly, but I have heard that they are always praying, and that they never go out of doors."

"Would you not like them if they always did

that?" asked Edith; "it would not be wrong, would it?"

"Yes, I think it would be idle to spend our life so."

"What! to be always serving God?" asked Emily, quickly.

"Well, Marion, dear," said Edith, gently, "nuns do many things besides that. There are many Orders. One kind visits the poor, and teaches in the poor schools, and some attend the sick. One Order takes old men and women into their house, does everything for them to make them comfortable and happy; and to enable them to do this, even begs for them. Some nuns, as you fancy, spend their time in prayer, and others, like the Sisters that Emily and I are perhaps going to, have schools for young ladies. Then, their dresses are different; sometimes the habit is black, sometimes white, or brown, or even blue. Indeed, there are so many different kinds of nuns, that even if I knew them, it would take hours to tell you all about them."

"Nor are they always shut up," observed Emily; "some nuns are obliged to go out a great deal, and those who do not, have generally beautiful large gardens to walk in."

"But they must be very unhappy," replied Marion. "If I were them, I would run off when I found myself all alone, some day, in the street!"

Emily shouted with laughter, and Edith smiled.

"Why, Marion," said the latter, quietly, "if they did not wish to stop, they need not run away."

"I thought they were shut in, with great locks and keys."

"When your mamma has the street-door locked at night, is it to prevent you from getting out?"

"The very idea, Edith! just as if I should want to get out into the dark cold night. Of course not; it is to prevent robbers from getting in."

"Which is just the reason why nuns lock their doors," returned Edith.

"Yes, Marion," added the other sister; "what the cold dark night would be to you out of your warm snug house, such the world would be to the nun who has given up everything for God. To understand what a nun's life really is, one must be a Catholic; but any Protestant, who loves our Lord, can see, I should think, that a woman who does every little thing to please Him, must be happy."

"Yes, I can fancy that," replied Marion, after a few moments' silence; "but she must long sometimes to be home with her father and mother, and those she loves, for all that."

"What, love them better than God!" cried Emily.

"O! Emily darling, Marion is right," said Edith; "it must be very hard to give up one's home, even for God."

"Edie!" exclaimed her sister, reproachfully.

"Well, Emily, I really think so; you know how much I love the nuns, and I know that convent girls are always happy; but I could not leave papa and mamma for ever."

"Could you, Emily?" asked Marion.

"Who, I?" exclaimed Emily, opening her eyes.

"'I won't be a nun, I won't be a nun,
I'm so very fond of pleasure that I can't be a nun.'

"But, I tell you what, Marion, we have some one coming here in a day or two, who will tell you a great deal more about nuns and convents than we can; and that is Miss Horton, the young lady I told you of just now, who used to be our governess. I am sure you will like her, she was a Protestant once."

"How dreadful!" thought Marion, putting her hand in her pocket, but the little black book was safe.

"Well, girls, are you asleep?" cried Joe, making his appearance. "Come along, all of you; tea is being carried around to the dell, and we are going to boil the kettle, gipsy fashion, in the wood, and all sorts of fun. Come."

No second invitation was needed, and a very few minutes saw them all in the dell, awaiting the coming viands.

"Bravo!" cried Joe, seizing upon the first importation, which chanced to be the tea-kettle; "all right, Tom; there's a good fellow. You need not stop, we are going to manage for ourselves."

Tom disappeared, grinning from ear to ear, while Joe proceeded to build his fire and erect his tripod for the kettle.

"Jolly work this, isn't it, only rather warm?" he exclaimed, blowing vigorously at the flame he had kindled. "I think that will do now," he added, rising from his knees, and looking complacently at the result of his labors, as the sticks began to crackle and the kettle to sing. "I shall leave you girls to do the rest, for I must go wood-gathering."

"Here is the tea," cried Emily, diving into the basket Tom had placed on the ground.

"And a pot of jam," said Edith, in her turn.

"What a little loaf! I am sure that it will not be large enough. Call Tom back."

"He has gone too far—never mind, we must make it do."

"There's the milk in a bottle, and the butter in a cabbage leaf."

Tip! Hiss!—there lay Joe's kettle on its side, singing, like the dying swan, a parting lay.

"What shall we do?"

"Build it up again, don't let us call Joe," cried Emily; "we can do it just as well ourselves."

And so Emily made another fire in a dry place, while Marion and Edith set off to fill the kettle. But, even when that was once more singing, their misfortunes were not over, for Emily cut her finger as well as the bread and butter, and no sooner was that bandaged up in a pocket-handkerchief, than the tea was discovered to be missing. And a rare hunt they had for it, until it was found under a dock leaf, when all being ready, Joe was summoned, somewhat astonished to find his fire transplanted during his absence, and never did green-wood echo to merrier voices.

The first cup was just poured out, and Joe had been persuaded to promise them a wonderful tale, when a low growl from Jack arrested their attention. Edith set down the tea-pot while Joe jumped to his feet.

"What can it be?" asked Emily.

"Hush!" said her brother; "it is some one going across there. I wonder who it is; no one has any right to come into this wood. Hush!"

They listened, and this time a voice was heard, while the bushes crackled as the path was forced through them.

"Mammy, mammy, do carry me!"

"Whist! whist!—mamma can't carry you and baby too; come, Johnny, walk like a man."

"O, I can't! I can't!" And the weary child sank on the ground, just as the poor mother came in sight of the little tea-party.

Joe stepped forward. "Do you know you are trespassing?" he asked gently, but firmly; "this is private property."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but I have lost my way; if you will let my little boy rest a minute, I will go any way you will show me to get to Harleyford."

"But this child is too tired to walk so far as that this evening, it is almost two miles from here," said Edith.

"He will have to do it some way, my dear, though if I could get him on my back, I think, perhaps, I could carry him. Ah, children, children, may God in his mercy keep the dark day of trouble far away from your young hearts! Now, Johnny, my man, try and get on mammy's back."

But the child's eyes were fixed wolfishly on the food, and he did not stir.

"Come, dear." She strove to lift him, but she was too much exhausted; nature gave way, and she sank on her knees.

"I cannot go on yet," she exclaimed; "I am too tired and weak; let me stop only ten minutes."

"Ten minutes!" cried the boy; "do you think I would send you on, as tired as you are? No, stop as long as you like."

"Joe," whispered Emily, "they are starving; look at the child."

"Are you hungry?" he asked, bluntly.

"My children have had one piece of bread, I, nothing all day," replied the woman, with a gloomy smile.

An exclamation burst from all the children, followed by a whispered consultation between Edith and Emily.

"Marion, what shall we do? Would you mind giving our tea to them?"

"I do wish you would," replied Marion, delighted at the idea; "it is so dreadful to see them like that."

In two minutes a wonderful transformation scene had taken place. Edith was once again at the head of her rustic table, with the poor woman at her side. Emily had seized upon the baby, whom she was regaling with an unprecedented amount of sopped bread, while Marion and Johnny, already capital friends, were as busy as hunger and compassion could make them. As for poor Joe, his long legs, just before so fatigued, were now rapidly flying homeward for a fresh stock of provisions.

"You would never have reached Harleyford without food or rest," remarked Edith, compassionately.

"Ah, my dear young lady! I only asked the way to Harleyford because it lay on my road, but my journey will not stop short this side of Ennington. I thought, however, that we might get a lift in a wagon or cart going there, if we once got to Harleyford."

"But you don't live at Ennington, do you?" asked Marion.

"I did live there once, but I have not seen the dear old place for many years; now, whether my poor old mother is living, I do not know, and I dread getting to the town to ask, for an awful feeling comes over me sometimes that she is dead."

"What is her name?" asked Marion. "I live at Ennington, and I know almost everybody there."

The woman paused; her very life seemed to hang on Marion's answer. "Mary Turner," she faltered.

"Mary Turner! why, that is the name of our old servant, who has lived with us so many years!"

The woman looked as though in a half dream. "My mother lived with a Mrs. Howard," said she, at length.

"This is Miss Howard!" cried Emily, clapping her hands. "Now, are you not happy? you see your mother is living."

"Thank God! thank God!" ejaculated the poor woman, covering her face with her hands.

"And quite well and happy," added Marion; "poor dear nursey, how delighted she will be!"

"Does she ever speak of me?" asked the woman, glancing up.

"Very seldom; but she told me once that she thought of you, and prayed for you always."

"But why have you not written to her?" asked Emily; "you might have done that."

"First from pride, then from shame. Ah, child, child, but mine is a sad story. I was just fourteen years old when I left my poor dear mother, not long after my father died, to go to service in London. I had very good places, for I was quick with my needle, and I got on from one thing to another, till at the end of six or seven years I went as lady's maid. I travelled about with my mistress in foreign parts, and saw a good deal of the world, for two or three years; and I grew fond of pleasure and fine clothes. Up to this time I wrote regularly to my mother, and used to send her presents, and I had begun to save up some money to go back and live with her. I meant to take the little cottage again that I was born in, to get my living by dress-making, and to have her live with me, and make her happy in her old age. But then the love of foolish nonsense came over me, and I grew changed; and just about this time my lord took a valet, and though my mistress warned me against him again and again, for she never liked him, I would talk and laugh with him, and more than once went to the theatre with him. He was a Frenchman, and not, as my lady said, in any way suited to a young girl religiously brought up, for he was an Atheist, and feared neither God nor the devil.

But I did not care, although I knew what a bad companion he was for me; but I did not know all that I learned afterwards. At last my mistress told me she had written for my mother to come up, for that she was certain if I was left to myself I should go all wrong. I told Adolphe, and he went into a dreadful passion, and persuaded me to go away with him. We were married, and I went to Liverpool with him, where I lived ever since; but from that time to this I have never heard one word of my poor mother."

"And where is your husband?" asked Edith.

"Dead, Miss. I need not tell you now all I have gone through, for my married life was as wretched as it deserved to be; but whatever my poor dead husband's sins may have been, I believe he died repentant. He had to be buried by the parish, and my baby was born in the work-house about a month after his death. As soon as I was strong enough, I came out again, and tried to get a little home for my children, but it was of no use. At last, one way and another, I got ten shillings together and set off to come here. It has been hard work, I can tell you, ladies. We came partly by railroad, and sometimes we managed to get a lift for a few miles in a cart; but the great part of the way we have come on foot, sleeping in barns, or on fine nights under hedges. I spent my last penny this morning, and—you know the rest."

"Well, you will be able to get to Ennington now; we will see about a cart to take you there."

"Thank you kindly, most kindly, young ladies; but only think, after all, when I get there, what a disgrace I shall be to my poor mother."

Marion was silent, for she knew very well that this would be just such a disgrace as Mrs. Howard would not relish.

"I wish something could be done to make you more comfortable before going home to your mother," said Edith. "We must see."

At this moment Joe arrived with fresh provisions. A plate of cold beef and a glass of strong ale brought real life once more into the poor woman, and half an hour afterwards she arose to depart.

"Why, you don't suppose you're going off to Ennington, or even to Harleyford, to-night, do you? Come, youngster, get on my back," cried the undignified Joe, in whose bright black eye something very unwonted was twinkling. "You are not going farther than the Cedars this evening, I can tell you. They are making up a bed already in one of the men's rooms, which just happens to be empty. Bring the baby, Em, and set Jack to watch these things till we send for them. Now then, hurrah! off we go!"

And with the dusty, but pretty child clinging to his back, Joe Darrell started across the fields, followed by the girls and the poor woman, the former all wanting the baby at once, and carrying it by turns.

"Good-night, Marion dear," said Edith, as she

kissed her at her bed-room door. "Does it not make you happy to think that the poor woman is comfortable for at least one night? Betsy says she is so grateful, and looks so happy. I do not know how she has managed, but she has found them all clean clothes. Good-night!"

"Poor, dear old nursey!" cried Marion, the tears glistening in her eyes; "how thankful she will be! Edith, darling, your mamma is very good."

CHAPTER V.

"AND what are you going to do with your protegees?" asked Mr. Darrell of his little Emily, as for the twentieth time she recounted the adventures of the preceding evening.

"We want you to help us to decide that," said his wife. "I certainly cannot see what good she will do by going to Ennington. It is very certain Mrs. Howard will have no place for them, and what can an old woman like poor Turner do towards the maintenance of a woman and two children?"

"Eliza must work for herself," said Mr. Darrell.

"Which she tells me she is only too ready to do, in any way, and at anything," observed his wife.

"Papa," said Edith, "I have a little idea in my head, but you must not be vexed if you do not like it. It is only a sudden thought, you know."

"Go on, dear child, what is it?"

"Well, papa, you know Jarvis at the lodge is going. Could you not put Eliza in instead?

I think, from her being up between four and five, to alter the old clothes that Betsy gave her, and from the nice natty way in which she has dressed the children, that she is naturally quick and neat. Even yesterday they were rather dusty than dirty."

"And to-day they look lovely—like two little angels!" broke in the impetuous Emily.

"Not at all a bad idea, Edith, for providing a shelter; but what could she live on? We could not let her take in washing at the lodge, and if she went out charring, she could not open the gate."

"But, papa dear, she could take needle-work, which is her real business. Mamma herself could give her a great deal to do, and if she is clever, she would be a real boon to the neighborhood, where mamma says, though there are plenty of dress-spoilers, there is not one dress-maker."

"What think you, Mary?" he asked, turning to his wife.

"That Edith has an old head on young shoulders. If Eliza is clean, neat, and handy, she would be certainly the right woman in the right place."

Nothing could exceed the gratitude of the poor creature when the plan was proposed. Jarvis was willing to retire at once. Mrs. Darrell found a few articles of plain furniture, besides those already in the lodge, and within twenty-four hours from her arrival in the dell, Eliza Turner found herself and her little ones sheltered in a sweet little home

embowered in roses and summer flowers, under the kind and gentle guidance of the mistress of the Cedars.

Merrily rolled the week along, with the cricket match, boating, strawberry feasts, and haymaking in the higher croft, and last, not least, the runs backward and forward to Eliza, and the romps with her children, the baby especially being a most untiring plaything. Besides this, there were visits to be paid and received, for Harleyford was a sociable, old-fashioned town, and already Emily and Edith had made many nice friends. Many amongst these were, of course, Protestants, but this difference of creed made none in the spirit of kindliness that pervaded the little parties that met from time to time in the hayfields, cricket ground, and each other's houses. Marion liked them all, although, as Emily had prognosticated, she did learn to love Edie with a deeper love than the rest; and when sometimes Mr. Lisle's words rose before her mind, warning her even against the children, it was with a feeling almost akin to indignation that she thought of them.

"Who could look at Edie and doubt her?" she whispered one evening, almost passionately, as having read a chapter in her little book, she was about to get into bed. "I wish I slept with her, for I feel lonely to-night; but I did not like the idea at first, because of what Mr. Lisle said. It is very strange that he should hate this religion so. I hardly remember what he said distinctly, but he looked awful when he spoke. I know he said that they

loved the Virgin Mary more than Christ, but they have more images of him than of her. Well, I do love a crucifix, notwithstanding what I said to Emily. I wonder which drawer she put it in; I should love to have a look at it all by myself. It cannot be wrong to look into the drawers, because Mrs. Darrell said I might use as many of them as I liked." Obeying a strong impulse, Marion took out the crucifix, and gazed at it long and steadfastly. And the dark scene of that crucifixion passed before her mind, with the scourge, the thorns, the nails, the bitter gall, and still more bitter insult. The words so gently spoken from the depths of that Sacred Heart fell in imagination on her ear, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" and while more than one tear fell on the image in her hand, the little Protestant trembled with emotion. "I do love a crucifix, in spite of all Mr. Lisle says," she exclaimed, suddenly. "I could love it as I do Edward's picture, and more, much more. Edward is very dear, but what is even he, to Jesus Crucified!" And in her turn kissing the little crucifix, she laid it once more in the drawer. "I will ask the girls to let me sleep with one of them to-morrow. I know they will. I am half inclined to run in to-night," she added, glancing at the large bed with its heavy cornices and crimson hangings; "it is so very lonely here, and the rain makes such a noise." A sudden gust of wind against the casement decided her movements, and, opening her door, she ran quickly along the oak passage that separated them from her; but her light

becoming extinguished by a sudden draught, so increased her nervousness, that she ran into their room as white as a sheet.

The twins were kneeling side by side before their little altar, now bright with lights. Marion, fearful of disturbing them, was about to withdraw, notwithstanding her fright, but Emily, who had turned at her sudden entrance, rose at once from her knees and prevented her.

"Get into Edith's bed, dear," she whispered, "we shall soon have finished. You are timid, and have come to sleep with us, have you not?"

"Yes," said Marion, "if I may."

Emily returned to her place, and Marion tried to catch the words, but in vain. "*Ora pro nobis*" she did not understand, and remembering something about an "unknown tongue," she put her head under the clothes, regretting that her black book had been left behind in her flight. When all was finished by something, though she could not hear what, in honest Queen's English, our little girl felt decidedly relieved, and inclined for a chat. But the answers she received were so laconic, especially from Emily, who was as mute as a mouse, that, fearing she had annoyed them by her intrusion, she sprang up in the bed.

"I know you do not like me to be here; it was very rude of me to come, especially to run in without knocking; but I was getting so silly and timid. I am all right now, and would rather go back again."

"No, darling," replied Edith, gently detaining

her; "I am well pleased to have you sleep with me, but Catholics never talk after their night prayers, if they can help it."

Marion was so tired that the sun was shining brightly on the still dripping leaves when she awoke. To her surprise, her companion was no longer by her side; and on rising and peeping into Emily's room, she found the other little couch vacant also.

"Ah, dear, how late I shall be for breakfast! Why did they not call me!" and she began dressing in good earnest, expecting the bell to ring every moment. But no bell rang, and when she was partly dressed a peep at the staircase clock told her it was only half-past seven. "They must have gone out for a walk," was the conclusion she arrived at. "I suppose they thought I was tired."

Her toilette being ended, Marion said her prayers, and, having brought her little book, sat down to read. But her ideas were wayward, and it was in vain she tried to fix them, so, half closing her book, she sat and thought. She looked at the little altar, with its sweet flowers, burnished candlesticks, and stately image, around which a curtain of white lace fell in graceful folds from a wreath of blue flowers above.

"It is very pretty; I wonder what Mr. Lisle would say to it? I think it is very nice to have a little corner in one's room given to God, and if He does not like things to be beautiful, why did He have the old Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple so grand? I know, of course, religion was altered

after Christ came, but God Himself remained the same. He never changes, and if He liked things as splendid as everything belonging to the old Temple was, it seems strange that He should not like this splendor now. If I could make a religion of my own, and if I were rich, I would still be a Protestant, but have things as beautiful as I could. God likes flowers surely, because He himself makes them; so I would put them in my church, and lights too, in imitation of the candlesticks in the Jewish sanctuary. I would have pictures of the life of Christ hung up in different places, and a crucifix where every one could see it; then people must think of Him. I suppose Mr. Lisle would say that all this is wrong, but I can't help it. I must keep these thoughts a great secret from everybody, I suppose, though I am sure, if I ask Him, God will take them away if they are not right. It says nowhere in the New Testament that churches must not be beautiful, but in many places in the Old, that they must. I have thought of this before, but never very much. Why, I do think," she added, springing suddenly from her seat, "from what Mr. Lisle said a little time ago, that I must be a Puseyite!" The blood flew to her face and neck with the excitement of the thought, and she started as she caught sight of herself in the glass. "When I am older, I will see what Puseyites really believe; and if I find them what I fancy they are, I will be one, for I am not satisfied with my religion. God seems too grand to be thought of as little as Mr. Lisle and old nursey seem to think of Him!"

Her ruminations were here interrupted by Emily, who danced into the room, whirling her hat by the string.

"What, up and dressed already!" she exclaimed.

"O, Emily, I should so have loved to have gone out with you; why did you not call me?"

Emily laughed. "We have been to church."

"To church! What, so early, and on Saturday?"

"To be sure! We go every morning. Mamma, Edith, Joe, and I, and sometimes papa."

"Always before breakfast?"

"Yes, in the summer, because we have Mass at seven; in the winter it is at nine."

"What is Mass?"

Simple question, asked by the little Protestant in childish curiosity. Could Michael, as he bows his radiant head before the eternal throne, give the reply? Could Mary herself, crowned in the highest heaven, Queen of created intelligence, Daughter, Mother, Spouse of the Triune God, tell in human words what is the mysteries of the altar? For a moment the question overpowered the child of thirteen. What could she say? How make her companion understand?

"The principal service of our religion," was the answer at last.

"How strange, to go to church every day! we only go on Sundays."

Edith, now entering, the conversation took a turn, and, at the sound of the bell, they all ran down stairs to breakfast.

It was Sunday, and with a very mixed feeling Marion lay awake next morning in Edith's bed, watching the flies chase each other round and round the circle, settling every now and then on the knots of the curtain fringe. Her two companions had gone out as usual, and she lay questioning much what this day, certainly not a little dreaded, was to bring forth. "I wonder what they will do; perhaps they will be like mamma says the Catholics are in Paris, and go on with everything just the same as usual. It would seem very dreadful to see Mr. Darrell busy with his farm bailiff as he was yesterday, or to see Mrs. Darrell and the girls sit down to needle-work. If they do not keep Sunday properly, but work on it like any other day, I shall know they are wrong, because any child can see it is wicked to break God's commandments. Really, really, I do not know what to think! What Mr. Lisle says makes me so uneasy all the time, and yet they all seem so very good. Perhaps I shall see to-day, better than I have done yet, what their religion really is. I like Miss Horton very much. Whatever could make her turn Catholic? I suppose she has gone to church too."

Yes, Miss Horton was at church, with her head bowed low after her communion, praying fervently at this very moment, among other intentions, for the little Protestant, whose winning manners and sunny curls had wonderfully attracted her the night before.

Marion met the little party at the lodge where

Eliza, looking quite smart in a new print dress, was just setting her children down to their bread and milk. She looked the picture of grateful happiness, and her room, as Emily phrased it, "like a little palace." Mrs. Darrell stepped in to kiss the children, while her husband slyly slipped a shilling into each little chubby hand.

The breakfast-table at the Cedars was a very happy one. There was something so joyous, yet subdued, in the cheerfulness of the three elders, and they naturally gave the tone to the rest of the family. For the first time since Marion's arrival the conversation was thoroughly Catholic. Miss Horton having resigned her engagement in the family upon their leaving Manchester, this was her first visit to Harleyford, and she asked many questions as to the position of Catholics in this part of the country. Marion was astonished to find, from Mr. Darrell's replies, that the Catholic church was a regularly organized establishment; she had always imagined that it consisted of a few people with very strange ideas, scattered here and there, without order or arrangement; and she was astonished to hear Mr. Darrell speak of its archbishops and bishops, its dioceses and parishes, its colleges and schools. But wider still the blue eyes opened, as he talked of distant missions, and of the number of converts each week swelling the ranks of the Catholic Church even in England. The wisest heads in Ennington knew but little of the great world beyond, save, perhaps, the broadest politics of the day, and it is not to be wondered at that little

Marion listened with astonishment to Mr. Darrell's description of the machinery of a church, upon whose very existence, until the week before, she had hardly ever bestowed a thought.

"Betsy will take you to church this morning, my love," said Mrs. Darrell.

"Thank you. Would you mind my going this afternoon with Edith and Emily?"

"I am afraid your mamma would not like it, dear child."

"Yes, she said I might go, if you would let me, that is, if I went to the Protestant church in the morning."

"Then I am sure you shall go; the girls will, I know, be much pleased to have you with them, and so will Miss Horton, and you must tell Father Stirling that we are expecting him to spend the evening with us."

It was with a beating heart that Marion entered the little Catholic chapel of Harleyford. It was a small building, and to an eye accustomed to nobler edifices, decidedly simple; but it was clean, well kept, and well arranged. An altar of white stone occupied the centre, with smaller ones on either side, dedicated to the Virgin Mother and St. Joseph. As it was a feast-day, the church was more than usually decorated, and bright flowers adorned every altar and image, while the solemn light of the red lamp was reflected in a ruddy glow from the gilded door of the tabernacle. Altogether, the scene was very striking to our little girl, who gazed around her from her seat beside Miss Horton, in silent

wonder. The service commenced by the rosary, which, to Marion's ear, accustomed only to Dr. Stebbing's sonorous mouthing in the Church prayers, or to Mr. Lisle's emphatic enunciation of the same, was quite unintelligible. Then followed a sermon from Father Stirling, on the commandments, and lastly came Benediction. If the chapel was pretty before in little Marion's eyes, it certainly was something far more brilliant now, as row after row of tapers glimmered on the altar. When Father Stirling appeared in his rich vestment, and the white robed acolytes, swinging the fuming censer, and bearing the lighted torches, passed on before, Marion wandered back, in imagination, to the days of Solomon, and fancied herself actually in the temple of the Jewish monarch. What had been her thoughts, child as she was, could she have read the Mystery of Mysteries—could she have pierced like the hearts around her, the humble veils, and recognized by the eye of faith, the Dweller on the altar? No, little Golden-hair, your eye may be charmed by Catholic ceremonies, your ear entranced, as the music of the grand old master peals forth in the "*O Salutaris*," your imagination may be led captive by flowers, lights and incense, but God will not yet reveal to you the secret of the Tabernacle.

More to the children's surprise, than to Miss Horton's, who already began to understand, Marion asked no questions concerning Benediction. It had been such a complete realization of her religious dreams, that almost unknown to herself, she laid it

by among the secrets of her heart, to be "read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested" in years to come. Not so the rosary; here she was all curiosity.

"What did the priest, and all of you, keep on saying when we first went in?"

"Our Fathers, Hail Maries, and Glorias; couldn't you hear?" asked Emily, laughing.

"No, I should think not, you rattled on so fast. What are Hail Maries and Glorias?"

"The Gloria you know well enough, my dear, because you say it in your church at the end of every psalm," replied Miss Horton; "the Hail Mary is a prayer to our Blessed Lady," and she repeated it.

"May I see your rosary?"

"Certainly; here it is."

"What a strange-looking thing! It is very handsome, though. Is this silver?"

"Yes; but I prize it most of all because the priest who received me into the Church gave it to me."

"Then you say first the Lord's Prayer, and then, let me see, ten Hail Maries, and then Glory be to the Father, and then begin the same over again, till you come to where you started from?"

"Exactly so," said Miss Horton, stepping behind with Edith, while Emily and Marion passed on before.

"What do you think of her, Miss Horton?" asked her companion; "is she not a dear little thing?"

"One of the sweetest girls I ever met, and one, I should imagine, who thinks deeply and silently. We must pray as hard as we can for her."

"Miss Horton!" cried Emily, turning suddenly around; "Marion says she thinks our Lord meant just things as the rosary, when He says, 'Use not vain repetitions.'"

"You must not be offended, really, Miss Horton!" exclaimed Marion, blushing; "I do not want to say rude things about the Catholic religion, but I want to understand it."

"Do not for one moment imagine, my dear child," replied Miss Horton, "that anything you can possibly say will be deemed rude by any of us; we all understand you too well for that."

Marion smiled.

"Moreover," continued the elder lady, "your objection is very natural, and generally, I suppose, the first thought excited in the mind of a Protesant by the rosary, the principal part of which is, however, the contemplation of the mysteries. Did you explain these, Emily?"

"No; I left that for you."

"Then, Marion, you are only half enlightened; and you know, proverbially, 'a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.' The rosary consists of fifteen mysteries; of these, five are joyful, five sorrowful, five glorious. First among the joyful mysteries is the Annunciation, when the angel came to the Blessed Mary in her little silent room, and told her that she was to be the Mother of God. Now, we think of this while we say the first, our Father, the

ten Hail Maries and the Gloria, which altogether we call a decade, and then pass on to the next, which is that of the Visitation. Here we see Mary, notwithstanding her dignity, visiting the mother of Christ's forerunner, as the simple Jewish maiden. Then, in the next decade, we meditate on the Birth of our Lord in the stable, when man refused Him a shelter, and He found it among the beasts of the field. Next, comes the Presentation in the Temple, where Simeon, the old prophet, and that pattern of Anchorites, the aged Anna, who made her home in the Temple day and night, passing eighty years in prayer and fasting, took the Divine Infant in her arms. The last decade is the Finding of Jesus in the Temple by His Mother and St. Joseph, after he had been lost for three days. Now do you imagine you would find it hard or strange to meditate on these beautiful things of God?"

"O no, Miss Horton! I should like to do that by itself very much; but I cannot see how people can say other prayers at the same time."

"I can well fancy it seems strange to you at first sight, my dear child; but I think I can illustrate it to you. Do you never perform actions whilst your mind is imbued with the spirit of something to which these actions tend, but of which they form no immediate part? For instance, in a visit of condolence to a bereaved friend, the departed one is perhaps barely mentioned, and yet the loss sustained is never absent for an instant from the mind of either the mourner or the comforter, and every word uttered, though perhaps only commonplace,

is tempered more or less with the spirit of grief. Again, on Christmas day, with its scenes of joyous merriment and family union, how, amid all, does the spirit of the first Christmas insensibly pervade each thought, word, and action, of a Christian. Good-by, slips lightly off the tongue that looks for re-union to-morrow, and how it is spoken on the eve of a life-long separation? Then, Marion, dearest, can you not understand a little of the spirit of the rosary? Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us! says the sinner, as he meditates on Jesus prostrate in the garden. Pray for us! he cries again, as the Blood shed for the guilt of the whole world, and for him in particular, falls upon the ground of Gethsemane. Pray for us! again and again he exclaims, as the alternate view of God's humiliation, and man's wretchedness, bursts upon him, till lost in the wonders of redeeming love, he cries, Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost! Again, he contemplates, amid the glorious mysteries, the Coronation of our Lady. Jesus has entered the Holy of Holies, and there, in faith, he sees the Virgin Mother, too. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us! he exclaims, lost in the contemplation of her dignity. Crowned Queen of Heaven! Then pray for us, and again and again through all the decades, he invokes her blessed name, and thinks of the infinite love of God, and the power and gentleness of her, to whom God refuses nothing."

"I understand," said Marion, thoughtfully; "I quite see what you mean."

"The rosary is more like a string of meditations than a prayer, is it not, Miss Horton?" asked Emily.

"It is both, my dear; hence its great beauty and efficacy."

"You have only told me the joyful mysteries yet," said Marion; "what are the others?"

"The sorrowful are, the Agony in the garden, the Scourging of Jesus, the Crowning with thorns, the Carrying of the cross, and the Crucifixion."

"Those are beautiful," replied Marion; "any one could meditate on those, even a Protestant."

"So they could on all, except, perhaps, the two last glorious ones, which are certainly essentially Catholic."

"Tell me those."

"The Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption, and the Coronation, are the glorious mysteries. The two last refer to our Blessed Lady. You know, we believe, that after her death, she was carried, body and soul, up to heaven, where Jesus crowned her Queen of archangels, angels, and men.

"I do not understand all that," said Marion; "but the rosary is enough for me to think of for to-night. I do like that very much. You nice little beads," she added, seizing Miss Horton's chaplet, "who would think there was so much in you? But I should never remember the mysteries, will you write them down for me?"

"I will, as soon as we get in," said Emily; "but Miss Horton, mamma said Edie and I might go

round and bring Dora and Jessie Seymour home to tea. Do you mind walking gently on with Marion? I dare say we shall catch you before you get far."

"Certainly not, my dear; I am quite sure we shall get on very well together. If we get tired, we shall sit down, and make ourselves comfortable. I hope this little lady will not convert me, though!"

"I shall not try," said Marion, laughing, "for it would be only labor lost. I know you are as firm as a rock."

"I hope so," said Miss Horton, laughing in her turn; "I have not much disposition, certainly, to travel back again."

"I cannot fancy that you were ever a Protestant," said Marion; "it seems such a strange thing."

"Well, so it does, Marion; I can scarcely fancy it myself sometimes," replied Miss Horton.

"Ah, yes! but I do not mean it as you do," cried Marion; "I cannot fancy how people feel, who take such a tremendous step as to change their religion. It seems natural for Emily and Edith to be Catholics, because they were born so, but it is different with you. Will you tell me why you changed?"

"I think we had better do as I said we would, and sit down here first. Yes," continued Miss Horton, as soon as they had arranged themselves, "I will give you one reason which, I think, you can understand, why I learned to like the Catholic religion, though this is by no means one of the chief ones."

"What is it?" asked the child, anxiously.

"When I was a little girl, Marion," returned

her companion, "like most other little girls, I was giddy, thoughtless, and fond of play; I very seldom thought about anything seriously, and though I could not conscientiously have neglected my religion, I fear it was little more to me than a thing of daily routine. As I grew older, however, my father, who was a very scientific man, wishing to give me a habit of reflection, gave me some books; and among others, elementary works on the sciences. From this time I changed, a great fancy for this kind of study seized me, and, indeed, to this day, there are few things in which I take so deep an interest. My father's intention in giving me these volumes had been that I should study nature, but I studied God. I saw the world as He had made it, bright, glorious, and beautiful; but I saw more. I saw creation as a great harmonious whole, and the world in which we live and move, had now a fresh charm for me. The grand secrets of the past, revealed in the 'Stone Book of Geology,' the mighty speculations of astronomy, the magnificent discoveries of the telescope, the marvels of the microscope, each, and all, threw new ideas into my hitherto circumscribed notion of the Creator, Father, and a deep conviction gradually stole over my soul, that for a world so beautiful there must be one grand religion. As I looked at Protestantism, with its numerous sects, I felt how little it was in unison with the harmony of this creation! Marion, my child, believe me, I am now thirty years of age; I have had friends in many sects and of many opinions, but, never among them all have I found

two Protestants who thought alike. Now, in wordly matters this diversity of ideas is of little or no consequence, but it is not so with the things of God. He has revealed Himself, and by that revelation man must stand or fall. Depend upon it, He who made the material world so fair, has not left the spiritual one in mist. You look surprised, and perhaps, my dear, I have said too much—not a difficult thing to do upon a subject on which one feels very deeply. But now we shall have to leave our little nook, for I hear our young friends coming, and so we must reserve the rest of our conversation for another time."

CHAPTER VI.

OTHER friends had arrived at the Cedars during the absence of Miss Horton and the children, and in the course of the afternoon the party was still further increased by the arrival of Father Stirling, the parish priest. He was a man of not more than forty summers, but Care had cast her shadow upon him, for the stately figure was already slightly bowed, and the dark hair interwoven with many a silver thread; but his look, his voice, his manner, were still young, and there was such an expression of fatherly kindness and benevolence in his whole mien, that he was a universal favorite, not only with his own flock, but even among the Protestant families of the bigoted little town of Harleyford.

They were certainly a merry party, so much so, that when, after tea, they gathered into little sociable knots in different parts of the drawing-room, Marion, escaping from the rest, seated herself upon a retired ottoman, close to a French window, looking out upon the lawn. She felt so uncomfortable that, had she known how to beat a retreat unobserved, she would certainly

have done so; for though as yet conversation had been the order of the evening, it was something so unusual to our little girl that she felt positively frightened. What, then, was her horror, when Joe suddenly appeared with card-box and counters, while Edith placed chess, draughts, and other games before them! It was not long before the young people had obeyed Joe's summons, and were rapidly seating themselves around the centre table. Father Stirling and Miss Horton engaged in a game of chess; the others made up a whist party, while Jessie Seymour, seating herself at the piano, accompanied herself in an Italian song. Marion withdrew still deeper into her nook, and snatching her little black book from her pocket, pressed it almost convulsively to her heart.

"O, Mr. Lisle, what would I not give to be talking to you in Ennington church-yard, as I was this day fortnight! He is quite right! The Catholic religion is a wicked thing! I did like what Miss Horton told me; but I don't care, I hate it all now."

"Marion," said Edith, "they want you to play at cards, but you would not like to do so, would you?"

"No, indeed, I should not," replied Marion, very decidedly.

"Shall I come and sit with you, or would you rather read your book?"

"I would rather read, please. Do not distress yourself about me. I am getting on very well."

"Protestants do not do anything on Sundays but read, do they?" asked Edith.

"No, nothing," replied Marion, over whose bright little brow a very dark shadow was perceptibly gathering; "but do go back to your friends. I would really rather read than do anything else."

"It seems so strange to leave you here to yourself."

"No, not at all."

And so Marion was once more left unmolested, save by the peals of laughter from the round table, which now and then sadly disturbed her equanimity. But she only tried to read the harder.

"What did she say?" asked Dora Seymour, taking her place at the cards, as Edith once more resumed her place.

"She seems quite vexed," said Edith.

"Are not Protestants ridiculous?" continued Dora. "Just as if there could possibly be any harm in anything Father Stirling sits by and allows."

A smile was Edie's answer.

"I suppose they never do anything but read, pray, and talk scandal all day."

"O, Dora!"

"Well, really, I mean it. I have a religious horror of a Protestant Sunday. What is she reading?"

"The Testament, I think."

Dora laughed. "Hard work to be recollected

just now, I should imagine. I find it difficult enough to make a meditation in church. I should get awful distractions if I tried to make one here."

"So should I," said Emily; "but she is only reading."

"Well, but spiritual reading is almost like a meditation," said Dora. "Do you like that song Jessie sang just now—'Il Se greto?'"

"Very much; she sings beautifully. You have both great taste for music."

And so the evening flew by, every one happy except little Golden-hair in the corner; gentleness and good humor prevailing on all sides. After a time the whist party broke up, and a varied conversation ensued, in which the members of the round game took part, as well as the two chess players. Many persons spoke to our little heroine, but she seemed so disinclined for conversation that all, even Mrs. Darrell gave up the attempt and left her to herself. The fact was that Marion's heart was divided. Young and light-hearted, she felt severely, not being able to take part in the pleasures around her, while all that Mr. Lisle had told her, and the promise she had made him, so mingled with her feelings of disappointment, that she not only felt sorry for what she considered her impiety, but felt positively miserable herself. It is true she pored over the pages of her little book, but though St. Paul's words glided before her eyes, the meaning did not enter her mind, and at last sinking her head

on the heap of cushions beside her, she closed her book. "O, mamma, I wish I was with you!" she whispered again and again, almost crying.

"Well, little lonely bird, what have you been doing all the evening?" said a gentle voice behind her.

Marion started. Father Stirling had walked around to the other side of the ottoman, and was seated close to her elbow.

"Nothing," she replied, looking up, and trying to seem bright; "I was only thinking about mamma."

"Is she far away?"

"No; only nine miles," said Marion, feeling rather ashamed at being so babyish.

"That is not a seven days' journey, is it?" asked Father Stirling, smiling; "and what do you think of Harleyford?"

"It is a very pretty, clean little town."

"And the Cedars?"

"The Cedars! I do not think I ever saw such a lovely place. I like it better and better every day. I could stop here forever, I am sure, and still find something fresh. Edith and Emily ought to be very happy."

"And so I think they are, do not you?"

"Yes, very, and they are both so good. If you only knew how kind they were the day I came, to a poor woman we found in the wood; and Joe, too, is as good as his sisters." And she related, with sparkling eyes, their adventure with poor Eliza.

"And so you are very happy here?"

"Yes, generally, that is——except this evening," and she paused.

"And this evening our little friend thinks us all very wicked, and feels unhappy," returned Father Stirling, smiling.

Marion hung her head. It was so exactly what she did think, that she had no reply to make.

"What have you been reading?" asked the priest, laying his finger on Mr. Lisle's book.

"St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians."

"And very beautiful it is," replied Father Stirling, gently taking the book; "do you think you understand it?"

"Yes, very well," answered Marion, with a little shadow of assumption in her tone; "the Bible is so simple, any child may understand it. God meant His word for ignorant people as well as wise ones, and so he made it plain."

"Did you ever notice," asked the priest, "that the whole of the third chapter is in parenthesis?"

"In what?" asked Marion, opening her eyes.

"In parenthesis, all except the first verse, which reads on to the first verse of the fourth chapter, when it repeats the words, 'the prisoner of the Lord;' so that leaving out the twenty parenthetical verses, the exhortation begins thus, 'For this cause, I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith ye are called.'"

"I see," said Marion, much interested, "but I never noticed it before."

"Then how, my dear child, could you possibly understand the epistle? Do not misunderstand me," he continued, as Marion reddened with sudden surprise and vexation; "I do not for an instant think you intended in any way to deceive me just now, but I wished you to see that you were deceiving yourself; for, notwithstanding what you say about God's word being so easy to understand, there are few things of which the meaning lies less on the surface than St. Paul's Epistles. They are far more difficult than you imagine, and I question much whether there is a child or unlettered person in England, let him be ever so great a Bible reader, who could give anything like a clear explanation of any twelve consecutive verses in the whole of this great apostle's epistles. Will you try?"

"No indeed," said Marion, drawing back from the book which he held to her; "for one thing, I have not been reading at all to-night, though I held the book in my hand."

"I can well imagine that; you wanted something to amuse you. Devotion in the wrong time and place burdens the spirit, and even becomes distasteful. You do not like to confess it, even to yourself, but St. Paul was too dry for to-night."

Marion smiled in spite of herself.

"There are some pretty books of Emily's there; you should have taken one of those."

"On Sunday! You do not know what they are."

"What, are they bad books?" exclaimed the priest, in well-feigned astonishment.

"No, but they are not religious books."

"Do they speak lightly of God and holy things?"

"No," said Marion, who could not help laughing amid her vexation; "but I am sure you know what I mean."

"Well, I suppose I do," said Father Stirling; "the fact is, my little friend, you have been taught that Sunday not only has its peculiar duties, but its own amusements also, and you are consequently shocked at the admixture of anything not positively religious in the observance of it."

"Yes."

Father Stirling was here called upon by Joe to decide a knotty point with regard to a "natural *ving-et-un*," which having arranged to the satisfaction of the card table, he returned to Marion.

"Will you have a little walk around the garden with me?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Marion, who had began to like her companion.

More than one significant smile was exchanged as they passed through the open window, and at least one fervent prayer ascended from the card table, that the little stranger might hear the first whisper of her call heavenward.

"How calm everything is?" said Father Stirling, as they stood watching the setting sun, just as Marion had done the week before in Dr. Stebbing's garden. "It seems a soft and peaceful ending of God's own day. I think the Beneficent Father has shown His love for his creatures, perhaps, more in the institution of the day of rest than

in any one other earthly blessing He has bestowed upon us. 'The bow of Apollo is not always bent,' said the ancients, and sweetly indeed is the bow of the week's toil relaxed by the sweet repose of Sunday."

"It is very nice here," said Marion, as they wandered up and down a pretty alley, carpeted with turf as soft as velvet, and bordered on each side by a high yew hedge. "It is much nicer here than in the house."

The clergyman smiled. "Both have their charms, I think, but change is always pleasant, do you not think so?"

"Yes, I do; but for the first time since I have been here, I longed to be by myself to-night."

"Do you want me to go away?"

"No, I like you now."

"But you did not like me at first."

"I did not like you while you were playing chess, or when you were watching the others playing cards."

"Why not?"

"Because, Father Stirling, I think such things are wicked. You puzzle me; for one minute you talk so nicely about Sunday, when just before you have been—"

"Breaking it! Out with it, you will not offend me."

"Well, that is really what it seems to me, and I promised before I came, whatever I might see, to keep Sunday properly myself. The first part of the day was very nice, stricter I think even than we

are ourselves; but since tea it has all seemed so dreadful, that when you first spoke to me I was actually crying."

"I know you were, and I liked you all the better for it."

"Did you?" asked Marion. "Why?"

"Because I saw you were conscientious. You would dearly have loved to join the gayety around you, but you were afraid of offending God and disobeying your mother, and so you begrudged us a glance. I was watching you with one eye and my chess with the other, and though I of course believed that in common with other Protestants you are mistaken in your Sabbatharian ideas, I nevertheless believe you will not lose your reward for this night's firmness. I should have been as grieved to have had you for a partner this evening as I was pleased to have Miss Horton."

"And yet, Miss Horton was once a Protestant."

"And so was I. Yes, my child, you may look surprised, but I used to keep Sunday far more strictly than you, or perhaps any one you know. My family were Presbyterians, for I am a Scotchman, and it was not permitted by that sect to touch the piano on Sunday, even to play sacred music, with many other notions peculiar to themselves."

"Father Stirling, I never could have thought that you had been a Protestant; but why is it that Catholics keep Sunday in such a strange wrong way?"

Father Stirling laughed good-humoredly. "First of all, tell me what you have seen wrong. You say the early part of the day was quite as you could have wished."

"Yes, indeed, perfectly so."

"And setting aside the fact of its being Sunday, have you seen anything to displease you? Have you seen any sin committed, or heard anything in any way improper?"

"Every one is too good for that. I do think the whole family would be perfect if"—and she paused.

"They were not Catholics!" exclaimed Father Stirling. "Well, I am very glad you acquit us of everything but Sabbath-breaking, for I think that I can show you that, thinking as we do, we have by no means committed sin."

Marion shook her head incredulously.

"First of all, my child, we must remember that 'the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.' These were the words of our blessed Lord, as He rambled through the corn-fields one Sabbath day, talking to His disciples, who were plucking the ears of corn, and rubbing them in their hands, as they passed along. The Jews grumbled even at the works of love that He performed on that day, so we see there is no pitch of absurdity too great for a man to arrive at, when he begins in any way to alter, strain, or add to, the commandments of God. But even Protestants admit that works of piety, charity, and necessity are lawful,

so that, however strict they may be, they pray, preach, attend the sick, relieve the unfortunate, drink, eat, and even make no scruple of poking their fires and snuffing their candles on Sunday. According to their creed they are more or less particular. But we go further. God says: 'Keep the Sabbath day holy.' Any Catholic missing Mass, commits, by the law of his Church, a deadly sin. God says: 'Thou shalt do no manner of work,' and take the only Catholic family you have ever visited—and which, let us hope, may stand as a fair type of the rest—and what do you tell me? They are, if anything, stricter than your own household." He paused, but Marion made no reply.

"With regard to keeping it holy, the Sabbath cannot be too much hallowed. Good Catholics generally sanctify it, at its very commencement, by a union with God, sweeter, holier, deeper, than I could make you understand, namely, by Holy Communion. This I know, my dear child, is beyond your present experience of things divine—may the Almighty God enlighten you!—but I tell you, because it is an action with us so sacred that any sin committed during the day would seem, if possible after this, doubly terrible. Many of our congregation—indeed, I may safely say all—whose duties will permit them, regularly attend two Masses, as the family here have done to-day, and prayers and Benediction in the afternoon, while, should we ever be able to maintain another priest, we should

have an evening service, which, I have not the slightest doubt, would be well attended. Nor is this lip service alone. I am quite certain any stranger visiting our church this afternoon must have felt, looking on the bowed heads around, that every heart was praying."

"O, yes! I did think so, everything was so beautiful, I could have stayed in the church for ever."

"Very well, then, you admit so far, that we hallow the Sabbath day, and that we abstain, as far as possible, from servile work."

"Yes, I do, but—"

"Is a jailor to bring forth some monstrous malefactor?" added the priest, laughing. "Well, let him come."

"It is not at all difficult to tell you what I mean. Why do you play cards and chess, sing songs, and read novels on Sunday?"

"Because God never forbade us to do so."

"What do you mean, Father Stirling?"

"Simply what I say, dear child—that God, in commanding us to hallow the Sabbath day, never forbade us innocent recreation. He does not even allude to the subject. God instituted the Sabbath for two ends, for His own honor and glory, and for the repose and renewal of the mental and physical powers of man. We fulfil the one end by our devotions, the other, as I have already said, by harmless amusements. Now, this is our rule; whatever amusement has in it a shadow of evil, is wrong on Sunday, and consequently forbidden; but mark, it is also wrong on Monday, Tuesday,

and all the days of the week, and forbidden, too. A simple game of *vingt-et-un* bears with it no sin; it is perfectly harmless; but were a man to gamble on Sunday night he would commit a sin, though his sin would be equally bad every day. Jessie Seymour has well attended to all her religious duties during the day, let us hope; to-night she relaxes our spirits and her own, by the charm of her beautiful voice. Nor would we have had her melody sacred, for one likes not to hear holy things without attention, and therefore in the light-hearted mood of the company secular music was both more appropriate and more agreeable."

"But, mamma says, that in Paris, the shops are many of them open, and the cafes, theatres, and all kinds of places of amusement. Do you approve of that?"

"Miss Howard, I know few things more distressing, and yet, at the same time sweeter, than Sunday in Paris. You may well look surprised, for this is, certainly, what we call a paradox. For one, who has been all his life accustomed to the solemn stillness of an English Sunday, I know few things more painful than to walk the streets of Paris on a Sunday morning, where open shops, itinerant venders, bustling purchasers, loaded carts, and carriages, meet the eye at every turn. To a Catholic, finding himself, for the first time, in a country professing his own faith, it is more than painful, it is overwhelming. But let him ask one fervent Catholic that he meets, what he thinks of it, and the reply will be that of my own friend,

M. l'Abbe B—, '*C'est un vrai scandale.*' France is essentially Catholic. Look at her mighty body of faithful priests, her monks, her nuns, her incomparable, her devoted Sœurs de Charite, and last, not least, her beautiful, crowded churches, and he will find religion doing her mighty, but silent work. But, my child, there is another element in France besides Catholicity, and that is Infidelity. Fatal offspring of the wretched Voltaire, nourished by the blood of the Revolution, and fostered by the impious publications with which France is still inundated, its fruits appear in evil of every shape. How can a man who writes on the gates of the graveyard, 'Death is an eternal sleep,' be expected to close a wicked romance, to turn from an evil play, or still less, to shrink from the desecration of the Sabbath? No, it is very mournful to walk through crowds intent on breaking God's commandments; but, remember, amid all its sadness, it is French, it is Infidel, but, my child, it is not Catholic."

"But what do you like in their Sunday, then, Father Stirling?"

"I like to walk on Sunday afternoon, or evening, in the more rural parts of this metropolis, and to see the merriment, gayety, and heartfelt glee that prevail on all sides. I like to see groups of people wandering here and there, and young men, boys, and children engaging in what are really innocent amusements. For instance, I love a ramble in the Bois de Boulogne, as the evening is closing in, and all are on the *qui vive* for a display of fire works

I love to see the crowds in the Louvre, or the Palais d'Industrie, the gardens of the Tuileries, and Luxembourg, and the more fashionable Champs Elysees. I like to see the carriages wheeling past, when you know the hour for devotion is over, and that the exercise to the spirited horses is not labor. I love the afternoon excursion to Versailles, or St. Cloud, to see the waters play, and I like to see the merry parties seated outside and inside the gay cafes and restaurants on the Boulevards, because all this may be innocent, and is recreative."

"And would you go to theatres and balls then too?"

"No! a decided, unmitigated no! and for the simple reason, that I would not go to theatres and balls on other days. There is the possibility that these places may be sinless, but I question much, whether any young person ever left a theatre or a public ball-room, as good and pious as she entered it. Should you know more of Catholic society, as you grow up, you will find that really serious people frequent neither one nor the other, and you will moreover see that in the private evening party, the strict Catholic will be much more guarded than many a good Protestant. For instance, I should be surprised to see Emily or Edith, when they grow up, dance anything more than a quiet quadrille, unless it were a circular dance with each other, or some other young girl."

"Is it wrong, then, to dance polkas and waltzes?" asked Marion, opening her eyes very wide.

"I do not say that, but I hope no one in whom I am interested will ever dance them. And, as you see, I do not like polkas any day," he added, smiling, "you are not likely to find them in my list of Sunday amusements. Do you think you understand us better now?"

"Yes," returned Marion, frankly, "but I should be very sorry to join in amusements myself."

"Nor does any one desire you to do so, my dear child; act up to your own conscience; all I ask of you, is not to be scandalized when other people act up to theirs. Prejudice goes a great way with us all. We live in a Protestant country, and its stiffness finds its way even into Catholic families. We are all bound to keep Sunday holy, under pain of sin, but certainly beyond making ourselves dull and mopy, we should do nothing worse, if after church we took up our Bibles and prayer-books, and never lifted our eyes from them till we went to bed. We should lose much happiness, but we should commit no sin; while were you, on the contrary, in your present belief, to engage in amusements which you thought to be displeasing to God, however innocent they might be in themselves, you would do decidedly wrong. It was for this reason I was pleased with you this evening, and much as I should like to hear you sing," he added smiling, "I should be very sorry for you even to favor me with the 'Last Rose of Summer.'"

Marion was silent. Father Stirling's words were, she felt, reasonable, and her agitation of spirit had quite subsided. Beneath the soft influence of his

words, she felt the vitality of the atmosphere around her, and saw that, however she might disapprove of the Catholic Sundays, they were not, in their gayest moments, freed from the restraints of Catholic piety.

"And now shall we go back to the others, or do you still shrink from the drawing-room?" asked the priest.

"No, not at all; you have done really as you said, and I do feel that the Sunday amusements of Catholics are no sin to them."

"On the contrary, my child, you see one may almost call them a part of their religion, since, by them, they recreate their souls for God's better service."

Marion looked up. "Amusement is a strange part of religion though," she answered, musingly.

"It is astonishing," replied Father Stirling, "into what trifling actions of our lives religion does enter. Did it ever strike you, that in eating your dinner, you perform not only a necessary, but a religious action?"

"No," said Marion, laughing.

"And yet the Bible says, 'Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.' We eat to sustain life, and surely the great end of the life He has given to us, is God. No, my child, not the smallest action of a Catholic is unsanctified by his religion! I say Catholic, because Protestants do not, with perhaps some few exceptions, think of these things at all in a religious light, and consequently lose many little

graces, lurking even in the ordinary routine of every day life."

At this moment some other members of the party made their appearance.

"Where is papa?" asked Father Stirling, of Emily, who had been saying "Hail Maries" innumerable for Marion, but who, seeing the *tête-à-tête* ended, came bounding towards them.

"There he is, talking to Jessie; but really, father, you must not go to him yet, please; I have just been to bring the battle-door, for you are such a nice player. Do stop for five minutes," she added pleadingly, holding it out for him.

"Certainly, till supper time, if you like; there," he added, sending the shuttle-cock spinning into the air, "catch that if you can."

But Emily did catch it, while Father Stirling, on his side, let it fall, amid a peal of laughter from Marion and his little antagonist. But notwithstanding this mishap, he really was a good player, and they kept the little shuttle-cock in a constant whirl, Emily springing from side to side like a fawn, till poor Father Stirling, who was not quite so agile, began to grow very warm and red.

"Well done! well done!" cried Mr. Darrell, for by this time quite a group had assembled on the green sward. "Talk of gladiators and chariot races, I wonder whether ever the Forum witnessed such a trial of skill as this!"

"That you may safely say it did not," exclaimed Father Stirling, aiming a blow at the shuttle-cock, "nor anything half so sensible."

"I wonder how you would get on, if I were Nero, ready to kill and fry the first who let the shuttle-cock down."

"Rather nervously, I expect; but what a barbarian you must be, to make a man talk during such hard work as this!" cried Father Stirling, almost out of breath.

"O, go on; seeing that I am weaving a laurel crown for the victor," said Mr. Darrell, cutting a branch.

"Each of them has let it fall once," said Edith, "so they are quite even. Jessie is counting, they will soon reach three hundred."

"Let us go on to a thousand, father," cried Emily.

"Thank you; you would have to play with my ghost! There," he added, throwing down the battle-door, and seating himself on the grass, "I am quite done for, and ready to be crowned."

"Rather a cool request, for the vanquished, I must say," exclaimed Mr. Darrell, "No, I adjudge the wreath to Emily, the victor, and death to the vanquished by starvation. See, I hold up my thumb, he shall go without his supper."

"Misericordia!" cried Father Stirling, from the grass, while Emily was adorned by her father with a very spiky crown of laurel.

Marion was wonderfully amused by the merriment around her. "But is it possible," she thought, "that that joyous face belongs to the same man who stood preaching so gravely this afternoon, and who afterwards performed that very

solemn service?" She could no more have fancied Mr. Lisle playing at battle-door and shuttlecock, than she could have imagined him vested in Father Stirling's priestly robes.

After supper, of which, notwithstanding Mr. Darrell's judgment, Father Stirling did partake, there was a general move among the guests.

"Edie, dear," whispered Emily, "don't you wish Father Stirling would come and say the rosary and night prayers with us in the little chapel?"

"Yes," replied Edith, delighted with the idea; "see, there he is, walking up and down the terrace; let us go and ask him;" and the twins were soon by the side of their pastor.

"Certainly, my children; there is nothing I should like better. We must go at once though, for it is getting late. Call Joe."

The chapel in question was a pretty little building, deeply hidden in a copse of trees, which Father Stirling himself had blessed a few days previously.

A large image of the Mother of God surmounted the altar, which the care of the twins always kept bright with flowers. Edith soon lighted the tapers, and Father Stirling was on the point of commencing, when Marion's voice was heard calling her companions, in evident perplexity at their absence.

"Shall I go to her, father?" asked Edie.

"Yes; tell her what we are going to do, and if she likes, let her join us."

Edith accordingly ran off, and in a few seconds returned with Marion.

"So you have come to say your prayers, while we say ours," said the priest; "but we are going to say our beads first, and I am afraid they will scandalize you."

"Do you mean the rosary?"

"Yes, see!" and he held it up.

"O, no! Miss Horton told me all about it, and if the prayers were only to God, instead of the Virgin Mary, I should very much like to think of all the different things she told me."

"By the by, that reminds me that Miss Horton would, I am sure, like to join us. Run, Joe, and see."

For a few minutes the little party were silent.

"Father Stirling," said Marion, at length, "if you will tell me the things you are going to meditate upon, I will try and think about them, too; that is, of course, without saying the prayers."

"Very well, come and kneel then by me, and I will tell you what each mystery is before we begin the decade. But will you promise me just one little thing?"

"If I can," said Marion.

"I assure you it is nothing difficult."

"Then I do," answered the child.

"Ask our Blessed Lord before you begin, that He will teach you to love and reverence His holy Mother, as far as is pleasing to Himself."

"Yes, I will," and the head was immediately bowed.

The devotions commenced, and Marion followed Father Stirling through the first three glorious

mysteries. The Assumption and Coronation were events unknown to the little Protestant, but she wandered back in spirit to those she could understand, happy in the very presence, as it were, of a risen, glorified Redeemer.

"Father Stirling," whispered the child, as they crossed the lawn, now bright with the gleam of the summer moonlight, "your religion is very beautiful; I sometimes think I should like to be a Catholic myself."

"*Deo gratias!*" ejaculated the priest, but his only answer to Golden-hair was a smile.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was evident to her young companions that Marion Howard was attracted towards their religion, but, following the advice of Father Stirling, they refrained from saying anything to her on the subject, although she went with them every morning to Mass.

"Leave her to herself," said the priest, "and let her overcome those little prejudices, so small in themselves, but such insuperable barriers to a reception of the faith. A farthing is not very large, and yet, if held before the eye, it may hide a colossus."

One morning, about ten days after Marion's conversation with Father Stirling, detailed in the last chapter, Mrs. Darrell was surprised, in the midst of her morning duties, by a visit from that gentleman.

"I have called to ask you," said he, "if you think we might make up a little party to-morrow to Barnett's Wood. The weather is beautiful, and as we have holidays just now at the schools, I am a little less busy than usual. What do you think?"

"O, mamma! O, Father Stirling! How delight-

ful!" exclaimed Emily, springing up and clapping her hands.

"Stop, stop, mad-cap; you do not know whether you are going yet. Things require a little consideration," said the priest.

"O, I am sure mamma is quite ready!"

"But, how about papa?" objected the sober Edith.

"The carting will not be finished before to-morrow night," said Joe, who had been chatting to the girls from the garden, through the open window; "but I think papa will be quite free on Thursday."

"Joe is right," said Mrs. Darrell. "I am very sorry, but I am afraid Mr. Darrell would not be able to leave his men to-morrow."

"What a pity!" cried all the children in a chorus.

"Couldn't you manage to make it Thursday, father?" asked Emily, coaxingly, and sideling up to him.

"Well, really," he replied, stroking his chin, "I don't know; but I suppose it will not be quite impossible, even to do that."

"Mr. Darrell could go with us then, I know," said their mother.

"Very well, then," said Father Stirling, "I must contrive it too. As for getting Seymour to join us, that is, I suppose, quite out of the question; country doctors get few holidays; but I am sure Mrs. Seymour and the children would enjoy the day very much. if we could contrive to pack them."

"O, yes, I think we can manage it if we take the phaeton and dog-cart," replied Mrs. Darrell.

"Suppose I was to borrow old Jackson's gig, and relieve you of myself and one of these little people?" suggested the priest.

"O, please take me, father!" cried all the children together.

"Let us draw lots," said Joe; and, amid a great deal of fun and laughing, it was agreed that Emily should ride to the Wood in the gig, and that Marion should be Father Stirling's companion back.

Mr. Darrell's hay had been all safely housed the night before, and the June morning rose without a cloud. Miss Horton and the children went to Mass and brought back Father Stirling in triumph to breakfast. All were in rampant spirits, for Emily alone was sufficient to have sustained a whole regiment in merriment. How she sang and danced, and frisked, running up and down the drive every five minutes, to see whether Rufus was coming; and when at last he did arrive, with the unfashionable equipage lumbering behind him, Boadicea never sat more proudly in her chariot than did Emily Darrell in old Jackson's gig beside Father Stirling.

What a sensation they created as the three carriages rolled on, one after the other, through little villages, where staring peasants and gaping children greeted them from every house, old women smiling, the girls grinning, and the ragged urchins waving their caps, hallooing and hurrahing

after them until they were hoarse. On through turnpike roads, past hay fields dotted with hay-makers, and smiling cornfields ripening fast. On, amid singing birds and gurgling brooks, past loaded wains, and roadside inns, with dingy signs creaking with the wind. On, past dusty travellers, who turned and gazed with wonder at the merry cavalcade; past hedges, gay with dog-roses and honeysuckles; past cottages covered with woodbine and jessamine, and village churches buried deep in ivy.

On through the sweet green lawns of dear old England, where spreading trees met high above their heads; through country scenes with cows and sheep scattered in the meadows, and boys swinging on the gates, or riding heavy cart horses to water. On through summer heat and summer stillness, broken only by the rattle of their own wheels, and the joyous laughter of their own light hearts. And then the Wood! O, the delight of running wild beneath those grand old trees—of leaping through masses of fern that waved high above their heads—of tying up the horses—of jumping in and out of the empty carriages, in search of viands stowed away in all conceivable places, and of seeking a clear smooth place to spread the cloth, and decking the branches of a tree with hats and bonnets! O, the charm of all those thousand and one delights to be found only in a picnic!

"See!" cried Joe from a distance, "here are the remains of a fire!"

"Some one has been here before," sapiently remarked Emily.

"Gipsies, perhaps," suggested Marion.

"What fun if they would come now," cried Emily. "I should so love to see some real, live gipsies. What a splendid life theirs must be!"

"Do you think so?" asked her father. "I question it very much. A picnic is all very well, but for my part, I would rather be a Christian, and live in a house."

"O, papa, now listen! If I could have my own way, I would be a gipsy girl, living in the woods, like a bird. I should like you to be the great king of the band, and me the little queen. Fancy how beautiful it would be, always living in a wood like this, or travelling about from one place to another, on a white donkey crowned with flowers!"

"You on a donkey?"

"Me, of course! And for the other gipsies to gather around ready to defend us. O, papa, I am sure the gipsies must be the most delicious people in the world. They seem so good and innocent, so unlike other people. As for their stealing children, everybody knows that is nonsense."

"Very likely; at any rate we will give them the benefit of the doubt. But I wish their consciences were equally clear in the matter of fowl-roosts and clothes-lines. Delicious people! So much for the romance of young brains! Yes, very like a king I should look certainly, tink-

ering away at old pots and pans, while your majesty went around cheating servant girls out of their sixpences. I wonder if you would be brave enough to sleep on the grass in summer, and frogs, spiders, and beetles walking over you, and how you would like hiding yourself in the winter in the worst holes and corners of the town? Emmy, Emmy, what a set of scamps you have chosen for your favorites!"

This picnic was, of course, no exception to the general rule, for a whole hamper of glasses, small plates, and the corkscrew, were found to have been forgotten. What did that matter, while three laughing mouths could drink out of one glass, while tarts could be eaten in the fingers, and bottle-necks broken off? They had come to enjoy themselves, and enjoy themselves they did, laughing so immoderately that Tom and Betsy were obliged to run away to preserve a decent gravity, while the very horses turned from their feast of leaves to shake their ears in astonishment. But, delightful as they are, picnic dinners will not last forever. All was over at length, and again a wild troop rushed through the ferns; but the day was very warm, the first excitement over, and tired out, even with fun, the children at last sank down to rest beneath the spreading branches of a right-royal oak, not far from the elder party, who were quietly conversing on subjects very uninteresting to our little friends, whatever they may have been to themselves.

"Now, Joe, tell us a story," cried Emily, as she and Marion settled themselves very comfortably against the tree stump.

"What a notion!" cried Joe. "Go and ask Father Stirling to preach you a sermon."

"Thank you, we would rather have the story."

"But 'story, I have none to tell,'" cried Joe, unconsciously quoting Shakspeare.

"Make one up then," said Jessie.

"By George, you might as well set me to make a pudding."

"Nonsense, Joe, you know you can think of plenty, if you choose; you read enough."

"Tell us the one you were reading all last evening," said Edie.

"It is too long."

"You can make it short," cried Emily; "I know the one Edie means; it is called 'Rosalind.' I caught Joe crying over it last night."

"O, Em, what a shame! I declare I was only blowing my nose; but you girls had better get your handkerchiefs ready, for it is very sentimental, I can tell you. Well, here goes," he continued, and clearing his throat after the most approved fashion, and blushing up, as only a boy of fifteen can blush, he commenced the story of

ROSALIND.

Once upon a time there was a princess, great, rich, and beautiful, and her name was Rosalind. She was the daughter of a mighty king, and the fame of her beauty was so great that her father's

court was always crowded with knights and noblemen, princes and minstrels, and each and all were the suitors of the lovely Rosalind. But amid all this homage she was sweet and innocent as a mountain daisy. She would run away from the state of the royal palace, to roam the woods with her maidens, and would turn away from a grand speech, it had cost some unfortunate lover a week to concoct, to play with her pure white fawn. This fawn had been her mother's once, and now that that mother lay in the cold grave, Rosalind clung to it fondly, and loved it better than anything in the world, except her father. As the months rolled by, they found Rosalind every day more beautiful, and her lovers more despairing, for she grew more indifferent to them than ever, and so some of the poor fellows went off in desperation and found other brides, or went to the crusades, or sat at home and turned misers, and woman haters, and all for the sake of Rosalind.

One night there was a great storm, and amid flashing lightning and pealing thunder, a great knocking was heard at the castle gate. The warder looked forth, and he beheld a tall knight on a coal-black charger, who asked for shelter. And the warder bade him welcome in the name of his royal master, and the tall knight rode into the court-yard, and raised his visor. The Lady Rosalind looked forth from her casement, and gazed with wonder at this knight, more handsome than the heroes of her wildest dreams, and for the first time the white fawn licked her hand unnoticed. A splendid ban-

quet was spread in the hall below, for it was a day of high festival, and when the Lady Rosalind sat down beneath the gilded canopy, by her father's side, the stranger knight came and bowed himself almost to the ground before her, and Rosalind trembled. But as for the knights, when they saw their wit unnoticed, and the minstrels' songs unheard, they grew positively green with jealousy, and kicked the white fawn on the sly, and scowled on the handsome stranger.

"My name is Rodolph, and I am bound for Palestine," he said, and the king glanced at the red cross, and the golden spurs, and was silent.

Days and weeks flew by, and still the stranger lingered; and Rosalind grew pale, and the white fawn desolate, and the lovers almost raving mad with jealousy.

One night the king found Rosalind weeping, and Rodolph on his knees, and the old gentleman was rather astonished.

The knight rose, towering to his full height.

"Sire, I love the Lady Rosalind."

"And you, my child?"

"Father, I will be obedient."

And the old man was so charmed with the answer, that he joined their hands then and there.

The next day there was a grand feast in honor of Rodolph and Rosalind, and as the despised lovers were obliged to drink the health of the happy pair, most of them ate a good dinner, to comfort them in their disappointment. And then Rodolph went to fulfil his vow at the crusades,

and Rosalind shut herself up with her maidens and white fawn, inconsolable for many days. But when they talked to her of the time when Rodolph should come back and make her his bride, she smiled again and fondled her fawn, and again her laugh was heard in the green wood, as she rambled with her maidens.

But sorrow cast her heavy shadow over the royal castle. One night, the watch-dog howled, the bat flapped his black wings, the screech-owl hooted in the ivy, and when the morning dawned the Lady Rosalind was an orphan and a queen. Her maidens spoke in vain of comfort now, as she lay on the ground, beside her father's bier, and sobbed.

But as time went by, even this grief grew paler, and Rosalind was the crowned queen of a great nation, with crowds watching for her at her palace gates, and hailing her with shouts and smiles. But though she smiled in return, her heart was very heavy, for the past was buried in her father's grave, and the present, dreary without Rodolph, made the future a blank. She heard no tidings of her absent lover, and Rosalind drooped, but grew each day more lovely in her sadness, like the lily of the valley.

One day she rambled on the seashore, alone with her fawn, for even her maidens grew wearisome in her grief, and she watched wave after wave roll in, gilded by the setting sun, and she thought of Rodolph till she wept aloud, kneeling on the bleak and lonely shore.

"Daughter of an ancient race," said a deep, strange voice, and turning, she beheld an old man standing by her side. His robe was long and flowing, his beard and hair white as snow, and his whole frame bowed with the weight of years. But the princess shrunk beneath the glance of two piercing eyes, that entered her very soul.

"What will you?" she asked proudly.

"To comfort you, Princess."

Rosalind smiled scornfully. "Do you hold the reins of fate in your hands, old man?" she asked.

"I do! Come and see!"

Spell-bound by a power she could not resist, Rosalind followed the stranger. Their way lay along the coast, and as she went on, the scene grew wilder at every step; large rocks and heaps of sand, covered with coarse herbage and sea shells, stretched away as far as the eye could reach on one side, and the wide roaring ocean on the other. Her guide at length stopped before the entrance of a cavern in the range of gloomy rocks, and turned and gazed upon her.

"Enter," he said.

"To what end?" asked the maiden. "I have followed thus far because you spoke of comfort, and for this my weary soul yearns with a longing indescribable. But, can there be aught to comfort in such a spot as this? Let me go back, I see my folly!"

But the wrinkled hand still pointed inflexibly to the cave. "Enter," he said again.

"No; it would be of no avail. Who are you?"

"One in whose grasp lies the past, the present, and the future, and at whose nod the very fates bow low. My name is Azor, royal maiden. Trust me, and enter; heaven, earth, destiny, veil no secrets from my glance."

Rosalind hesitated for an instant, and then, with a faltering step, followed her guide through the dark portal of his dwelling; the white fawn trembled, but left not her mistress' side. They passed along a tortuous passage cut in the solid rock, and Rosalind shrunk as she walked through the dreary darkness, for the cold earth-damp struck to her very soul. But the pride of her warlike race sustained her as she followed the glimmer of her guide's lamp; the passage gradually widened, and at length she found herself in a spacious chamber.

It was a strange looking room, hung with skins, and lighted by the dull red lamps, that shed a murky glare around. A furnace burnt in one corner, over which a dwarf, hideous in its light, bent to replenish it. A curtain rose from the roof at one end of the apartment, and Rosalind trembled, as she thought what its heavy folds might conceal.

The wizard gazed on his lovely guest, a smile, almost of satisfaction, hovering on his lips, though his arms folded on his breast, gave him an aspect of deep humility; but, beneath the lurid glow of those fearful eyes, again the maiden trembled.

"Princess, give the sign, and that mirror, unveiled, shall reveal the absent Rodolph.

Rosalind started, and gazed fearfully around her, then, clasping her hands, firmly bowed her head.

As the curtain slowly rose, a large surface of crystal appeared before her. Rosalind at first could see nothing more, but while she gazed, a majestic forest rose to the surface, glorious with waving palms and the luxuriant vegetation of the east. A figure appeared in sight, and, with a bounding heart, Rosalind recognized her lover.

Breathlessly she watched him as he made his way through the tangled brushwood. "He lives! He lives!" she cried. "Father! you have kept your word, take what you will as your reward," and she glanced at the jewels that adorned her neck and arms. But the wizard stirred not, his glance was riveted on the glass. Again she looked, Rodolph was still there, but, horror of horrors! a monstrous lion, couched beneath a tree, was about to make his fatal spring on the unconscious warrior, intent only on breaking his way through the jungle.

A shriek rang through the cavern, and echoed from gallery to gallery.

"Save him! Save him!" she cried, falling on her knees before the wizard.

But Azor stood motionless, and the lion quivered with expectation, as his prey approached nearer and nearer.

"Azor, he is so young to die!"

"You alone can save him."

"How?"

"Renounce your crown forever."

"I do!" An arrow pierced the lion's heart, and the lion fell.

Again Rosalind and her fawn stood upon the shore. "When next you need me, you must summon me," said the magician; "I shall seek you no more. Three blows upon my door will bring me to you."

That night the troops of a mighty king surprised her castle, and Queen Rosalind fled away with her jewels, her maidens, and her fawn, and she reigned in the land no more.

Three months passed by, three months of adversity, anguish, and incertitude, and though the Lady Rosalind recoiled in horror from the wizard and his cave, love prevailed, and once again she found herself before the magic mirror.

It was the camp of the crusaders that she beheld, glorious in the setting sun, with its fair white tents, its waving banners, and stalwart warriors in gleaming corselets, hurrying to and fro. And there, in the shadow of his tent, upon a couch of leopard skins, lay Rodolph, locked in the deep slumber of a weary man. Long did Rosalind gaze upon the face so calm in sleep, every lineament of which was so deeply traced in her innermost soul. Of what is he dreaming? A smile flits across his features, and he murmurs, "Rosalind." Entranced, she turns to look at Azor, that this time, at least, he may participate in her joy; but the rock of his own cavern is not more immovable, and she turns from him to gaze again on Rodolph. The scene has changed; a turbaned form hangs over the sleeper, a gleaming dagger quivers in the air, as the bead-like eyes of the assassin gloat over their victim.

There is no time for words, she grasps Azor's arm in anguish unspeakable.

"Your beauty!" he hisses.

That night the Lady Rosalind lay upon her couch, raving in the delirium of a malignant fever. Her maidens fled, and the white fawn licked her mistress' hand alone. An aged hermit found her, sick to death, but beneath his skilful hands she lived again, for misery and Rodolph.

The evening sun is setting once again upon the billows, rolling ever onward in the restlessness of their power, and a woman, weird looking in her ugliness, knocks at the wizard's door. It is Rosalind, but the brightness of her eye is dimmed, unsightly blotches mar the once fair cheek, the stately form is bowed as though with age, and a thick black veil floats behind in the place of the fairy tresses. Again she stands before the mirror, but when Azor would withdraw the curtain, she grasps his arm in fear.

"It is too late!" he mutters, and Rodolph, bound hand and foot, lies before her in a dreary dungeon. No friend, no food, no gleam of heaven's light, but darkness, manacles, starvation!

"What will release him, Azor?"

"All you possess."

"My jewels?"

"Not enough."

"The miserable shelter I still call mine?"

"More than that. That is not enough to ransom Rodolph from his deadliest enemy."

"It is all I have."

"It is not enough."

"Alas! I have nothing but my life besides!"

The wizard laughed scornfully. "Not yet, not yet," he muttered.

"And must he perish?"

Azor pointed to the fawn.

"I cannot! I cannot! O my mother!"

"Then Rodolph dies; for four days he has not tasted food. He faints already; see!" and the mirror showed her Rodolph in a swoon.

"Last of my friends, adieu!" cried Rosalind, and the white fawn leaping into the air, as though struck by a sudden dart, licked her hand and died.

Alone in the wide, dreary world, a beggar woman wends her way from door to door, and lives on the charity of strangers. But she is ever welcomed; mothers pour their troubles into a sympathizing ear, while little children run in flocks to meet her.

"She is good as she is ugly," says an old woman, gazing after her as she limps away from her door.

"Aye cummer! and as wise as she is poor," is the hearty response. "Poor Rosalind is an angel in disguise!"

"What will you?" asks the wizard, sternly, as three trembling knocks bring him to his threshold. "Who are you?"

"All that remains of her that was once a queen.

"Aha! my pretty Rosalind! welcome!" and his cruel eyes shot fire.

"Where is Rodolph?"

"Come and see."

Even before the curtain was withdrawn, the roar of waves, the howling of the storm-wind, the pealing of thunder, and the hoarse cry of sailors in distress, broke upon her ear, and the murky glare of the red furnace revealed, in the depths of the mirror, black as night, a ship foundering in a tempest.

"There he is! I see him plainly, struggling in the waves! O Azor! Azor!"

"And just nearing home," cried the wizard; "two hours more would land him on our shores. Will you save him?"

"Do you mock me?" cried Rosalind. "What have I that I have not given, for my life you spurn? O, Azor! be merciful, miserable as it is, take it for his!"

"Not yet! not yet!"

"Then, Rodolph, adieu forever!"

"You have yet the chief ornament of race. That which your ancestors vaunted more proudly than riches, rank, or power—your honor. Learn to be spurned as vile and outcast, and Rosalind shall ransom Rodolph."

"Keep my integrity, and lose my name?"

"Keep what you will," cried Azor, "though when you shall hear yourself branded and stigmatized, what shall conscious innocence avail?"

"Enough; I submit. One day more, and then with Rodolph, all shall be forgotten!"

A mocking laugh ran through the cavern, and the curtain fell.

A gallant ship rides proudly into harbor, bearing

marks of a recent storm. A precious freight is hers; jewels, spices, and stuffs from the far east, while many a knightly form bending over her bulwarks, hails with a tearful eye the land of his birth. Burgesses crowd around to deal with traders from afar; fair ladies gaze with rapture on their lords' return, and churchmen flock to welcome the warriors of the cross.

Decrepit, weary, clothed in rags, jostled by all, for poverty finds few friends, a woman passes through the crowd, and gazes, with a life's history in her glance, upon the deck of the stalwart ship.

"Thief! liar! witch!" burst from the idlers around, but she heeds them not; Rodolph alone fills ear, and eye, and heart, and the contumely of a few short moments matters nothing.

"Prithee, peace, good friends!" says a stout burgess; "this woman harmeth none. Faith!" he whispers beneath his breath; "but, by our Lady, she is wondrous ill-favored."

"She is looking for her lord!" cry the crowd, in mockery.

A form springs to land. Many are stately there, but no one steps forth like him; many are fair to look on, but the glory of his martial beauty surpasses all. In an instant Rosalind has threaded the crowd, her hand is on his arm—Rodolph.

He had seen her form from the vessel's deck, and he knew her well, but he recoiled from her touch, and shuddered.

A jeer rose from the crowd. "The lady has found her lord!"

Alas! poor souls, they knew not how the random arrow of their jest flew home.

"Rosalind, you are wondrous changed," he muttered, "but we will meet anon;" and as he passed on his way a troop of gallant knights and fair ladies followed in his train.

"'Tis the great Baron Rodolph," cried the crowd, falling back on all sides.

"Witch! liar! thief!" again assailed her; but again she heard it not, nor quailed beneath the shower of missiles that fell around her. She turned away, and passed along the dreary shore, and though the dark night fell, and the winter wind swept across the sea, and howled around her like the voices of a hundred demons, still she passed onward, and Azor found a form rigid as marble lying across his threshold. He bore her through the vaulted gallery, and Rosalind awoke once more to life.

He was gazing at her with folded arms, when she raised her head.

"Where am I?" she asked; "where is Rodolph?" but the glare of the fiery eye recalled her to herself, and she sprang shuddering to her feet.

"Why do I find you at my door?" he asked. "For what have you come?"

"To show you your work," she cried, bitterly.

"A masterpiece, truly!" was the only reply.

"Is this the comfort, this the solace, you promised me when first we met?"

"What more will you—is not Rodolph safe?"

"He spurns me like the rest. He, for whom I

have borne all, abandoned all! My crown, my beauty, my reputation! All that woman holds dearest! O, Rodolph! Rodolph!"

"Will you have revenge?"

"Not for a thousand worlds, faithless as he is! But why should he spurn me? Man, show me myself!"

The mirror reflected a form, from which Rosalind shrank dismayed.

There was a long silence, broken only by the roaring of the furnace, the bubbling of the crucible, and the sullen roar of the sea without.

"Maiden," said the wizard, at length, "since you refuse my vengeance, will you call back his love? Shall I give you once again your crown, your beauty, your name, more lustrous than before? Shall even the white fawn come back from the land of shadows, to welcome the Rosalind of old, and shall Rodolph, loving and repentant, kneel once more at her feet?"

"Azor!" cried Rosalind, "have you such power as this? Who are you?"

"Lucifer, the supreme! Lucifer, the light-bearer to the benighted! Lucifer, the refuge of the soul, weary, crushed! Listen, sweet Rosalind, soon to be queen once more. Swear fealty to me, and all that I have promised shall be yours;" and, terrific in his fallen grandeur, the prince of darkness stood unveiled before her.

"Monster, depart!" cried Rosalind, with a shriek. "Think you, for Rodolph, I would lose my soul? Avaunt, in the name of God!"

A mighty convulsion shook the rock to its foundation, and the mirror flew in a thousand fragments. A shriek, echoing far and wide, broke from the baffled demon, as himself, his chamber, his dwarf, and the furnace, disappeared in a whirlwind, and Rosalind lay panting and breathless on the black seashore alone.

* * * * * * * *

Far in the depths of an ancient forest, whose giant oaks had reared their proud forms for centuries untold, unmolested by the woodman's axe, there stood a modest hut. Built of clay, and thatched with boughs, it gave but little shelter from the summer's heat or winter's cold; and yet, within it dwelt a woman, high-born and young. The fruit of the forest was her summer's food, while in the winter she wandered forth for charity, and husbanded her little store till spring. Rumor spoke of her wondrous wisdom and deep sanctity, and how, with tears and groans, she washed away the sins of her early days. And rumor spoke truth, for on her knees, until the very stones were worn, Rosalind wept over her rebellion to the decrees of Heaven. And yet there were times when earth would mingle with higher aspirations, and when forms once loved would glide from the spirit-land of the past; but Rosalind only bowed the lower in her devotion, until even Rodolph's memory paled into a picture in the volume of the past; a name to be forgotten only in prayer.

One day the gentle hermit wept even more bitterly than her wont, and though the evening

shadows lengthened in the grotto, the frugal meal lay still untouched. Six long years had passed since she stood before the ship from Palestine, but she watched not the flight of time. Devotion counts not years and seasons, and life was now only a short cold passage to a glorious home, through which she trod in haste. The ravages of sorrow and disease had passed, and, fair with the beauty of holiness, the Recluse of the Forest shone with a more hallowed beauty than Rosalind the Princess. Nearer, nearer through the forest, came the tramp of a horse's hoof, but she heard it not, as she sat in the rude doorway of her tent, pondering the past in bitter self-humiliation, and a knight was kneeling at her feet, before she could drop her veil.

"Rosalind! Rosalind!" he cried; "is it thus I find thee! sought through long years!"

"Hush!" said the Recluse; "Rosalind is dead!"

That night a tall horseman, with a drooping plume, rode away beneath the green-wood trees. Rosalind had given up all things for Rodolph, but the Recluse gave up Rodolph for God.

"O, Joe!" cried Dora, "what a shame! Only fancy, just as we thought poor Rosalind was going to be happy, after all her troubles, to leave her in the wood in such a miserable manner. Why, I could make a story with a better ending than that myself."

"What would you have done with her?"

"I would have made her forgive her repentant over, who would have carried her away with him

on his coal-black horse into the world again. Then he should have killed the king who had taken her crown, and they should both have lived happily all their lives."

"And died at an old age, I suppose," said Joe; "a very orthodox ending."

"Well, but Joe," said Edie, "such a life as you have left Rosalind living in is, I must say, a very gloomy termination to the story. Still," she added, "I think it ought to be something of the kind. Dora's ending would have been more interesting, but the one in the tale is more just."

"Why?" asked Dora.

"Because Rosalind had committed a very great sin in consulting the magician, and she did not deserve to be happy."

"But she repented," cried Edie.

"Yes, I know she did, and so she ought. But mamma says stories have not a good moral in them when wicked actions go unpunished."

"Well, it seems so," chimed in Emily, "that Dora and Edie have their own way. Rosalind was wretched when she did wrong, and happy when she repented. I like the story myself as it is."

"O, Emily!" cried Dora.

"I do; not though perhaps in the same way that Edith does, for I think the story has really a happy ending. To me there is no life more delightful than a hermit's."

"Except a gipsy's," said Joe, mischievously.

"O, that was only my fun, Joe; a passing thought that ran through my mind on first finding myself

in the wood. But the other is what I should really love." And Emily's cheek flushed.

"She has been reading the Fathers of the Desert lately, I guess," cried Joe, with a comical look at Dora.

At this moment the heads of Father Stirling and Mr. Darrell peeped around on either side of the tree.

"Have you been listening?" cried Emily, springing to her feet. "O Joe!"

"To be sure we have, for a long time, and have been much entertained by Joe's powers as a story-teller."

"And even more by your various moralizations thereon," said their father.

"And what is your opinion of the tale, papa?" asked Emily.

"Why, that its moral quite bears out the old proverb, that the 'Devil's wheat is all chaff.' But it is rather hard upon our sex. What say you, Father?"

"That it is a fair picture of the women of every age. Depend upon it, my dear sir, they set us an example in constancy and fortitude. There are not many men who would have endured one tithe of Rosalind's privation for a woman, or who would have shrunk like her into patient fortitude under her crushing disappointment."

"I felt a drop of rain, I am sure," cried Joe, suddenly springing up.

He was right. The sky, which had been for some time growing gloomy, was now quite overcast. And a general panic ensued.

"It will be a thunder-storm, sir," said Tom, "and a pretty tidy one. Look at the sky over there; the wind is blowing the clouds up fast, sir."

"We must get out of the Wood, then, at any rate," said his master. "You had better, my dear," he continued, turning to his wife, "all of you set off, as fast as you can, to the inn at the village of Ilcombe. It is half a mile at least, so you have no time to lose. These trees would be dangerous in a storm. Father Stirling, Tom, and myself, will follow with the carriage as soon as we can get the horses in. Are all the hampers packed?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"Then Betsy can go too. Now, Joe, you must go with your mother, and do the best you can."

"I wish Father Stirling would go, and let me drive his gig up. He would be of more use to them than I shall. Besides, if he catches cold he is sure to be ill, and I can stand a wetting."

"Thank you, my boy, but I should be very sorry to trust you with old Rufus in a storm. He and I are old friends, and he knows he must obey. He knew me in more fiery days," he added, half to himself.

Notwithstanding the hurry they were in, it was a merry party that ran through the lane leading from Barnett's Wood to Ilcombe, which, with its sharp-pointed spire, lay in a valley at their feet. It was a long half mile, but they arrived at last at the little inn, just as a peal of thunder growled in the distance.

It was a quiet, old-fashioned little house with a garden gay with flowers, and surrounded with clean white railings on one side, and a little farm-yard, with thatched stable and cow-houses on the other. A large tree shaded a horse-trough in front, by the side of which rose the sign-post, a wonderful work of art, executed by some village Raphael, and setting forth in all the glory of royalty his most gracious majesty, King William.

"Can we have a private room?" asked Joe, stepping into the little sanded, red-curtained bar, and addressing a buxom landlady, glorious in red ribbons, and still redder cheeks.

"Well, sir, there be a gentleman who has been dining here, as has got the best parlor. He be a minister, sir, but I don't suppose he'll mind you. Any ways I'll go and see, and I'll be bound for it, if you don't mind him, he'll make no objections. He seems very civil and gentlemanlike."

"O, stop, my dear!" cried Mrs. Darrell, from the doorway; "I should be very sorry to disturb the gentleman. You have nowhere else you could put us, I suppose?"

"No, that I haven't, ma'am."

"Is there no other inn?"

"No, ma'am, never a house will you find atween this and Higher Ilcombe. No, no; I'll just step in and ask him; it's very likely he'll be glad of company hisself." And the old lady bustled off.

It was not long before she returned, followed by the gentleman in question.

"I beg, madam," he exclaimed, bowing to Mrs.

Darrell, "that you will not scruple to make use of the parlor I have been occupying for my dinner. It is, believe me, quite at your service. A very small corner of it will serve for my accommodation," he added, smiling. "Our good landlady here is quite right in her surmises. I shall be very glad of company."

"Mr. Lisle! Mr. Lisle!" and Marion darted up the steps to the clergyman.

"Why, Marion, my child, this is a surprise!" And a shadow fell at once over the face so bright just before in the energy of kind politeness.

"There is no need of an introduction now," said Mrs. Darrell, smiling; "this is indeed a pleasant rencontre for Marion."

The whole party followed the curate into the parlor of the little inn, and for some time a general conversation was carried on between Mr. Lisle and the elder ladies. But it soon began to flag, as fears for the absent gentlemen began to arise.

"It is very dark," said Mr. Lisle, rising and walking to the window at the further side of the room, overlooking the little farmyard, "but I think it will hold up for a few minutes yet."

"When it does begin there will be no mistaking it," said Joe, who, with his mother and Miss Horton, were stationed at the front window, in hopes of catching sight of the delayed vehicles.

"There are no signs of them yet," said Mrs. Darrell; "they cannot, I am sure, escape the storm."

"We must hope for the best," replied Mrs.

Seymour, moving towards the window, around which they all now stood, grouped in anxious expectation.

Marion walked across the large room to Mr. Lisle, who still stood looking out into the farm-yard, where ducks, pigs, geese, and hens were indulging in a concert in disapprobation of the weather.

"Well, Golden-hair, and how have you been getting on?" he asked, stroking the glossy curls.

"Very well, indeed," said Marion; "I am enjoying myself very much. Have you seen mamma?"

"No, but I met Turner this morning, and she told me that Mrs. Howard left for London yesterday, and that she expects to remain there some time. And so you are very happy? Who are those little girls?"

"Edie and Emily Darrell, and the other two are the Miss Seymours. Do you not think, Emily, the one by the side of Mrs. Darrell very pretty?"

"Remarkably so. I never remember to have seen a more perfect face. How old is she?"

"Thirteen. I am sure you would like her, she is so amiable and so full of fun. But Edie is my favorite."

"Why?"

"Because she is so good and generous; she never seems to think of herself in anything. She is very thoughtful, and talks very little, but when she does, it is always about something sensible."

"I hope she does not talk of religion," said the curate, with a glance that pierced her soul.

Marion recollected her secret about Puseyism, and began to feel uncomfortable. Suppose Mr. Lisle should find it out!

"They all talk of religion very often," she replied. "It seems to be the principal thought of their lives; but they never try to convert me."

"That is, they never, on any pretext, mention the subject to you?"

Marion paused. "Yes, they do sometimes, but only when I ask questions. That is, when I ask, why do they do such and such things."

"And do you mean to tell me," he asked, in a low tone, "that you, Marion Howard, ask questions about Romanism? Then take my advice, and leave off saying the Lord's Prayer; for it is only mocking the Almighty to say, 'Lead us not into temptation,' and then to go and thrust yourself in its way. You may just as well put your hand in the fire, and pray not to get burned. 'Come out from among them, and touch not the unclean thing.' To think you should ever have come here! I wish I could take you back with me!"

"Really I could not, Mr. Lisle. Mrs. Darrell would be offended. You cannot think how kind she is to me."

"Of course, I know you cannot go," he replied, crossly. "I only spoke of what I should like to do. O, Marion, you are endangering your soul!"

The tone was so inexpressibly unhappy that Marion was really touched, though at the same time not a little vexed.

"Any one would think they were all trying to convert me," she exclaimed, half pettishly.

"And so they are; there is no doubt about that," replied Mr. Lisle; "and your only safety lies in your obedience. Promise me not to say one word more about religion, and I shall be satisfied. Refuse to do this, and I will write to your mother the instant I get back to Ennington."

"But I like to talk about it just a little—especially to Miss Horton, that young lady dressed in black. She was a Protestant herself once."

Mr. Lisle was far too angry to speak.

"Mamma said I might go to church sometimes, just to see; so I am not disobedient when I go, and I have only been very few times as yet. And then this is generally—indeed, always except once—to the early Mass before breakfast on week-days, when there is no incense or music, nor anything grand, and I sit and read my Bible all the time. Surely there is no harm in that. How can I promise not to talk of religion, and sit fancying something very terrible, which, after all, is only very simple, as I did with the sign of the cross."

"You are an obstinate girl."

He spoke so angrily that Marion was really pained, and felt very much inclined to cry.

"I am not obstinate, Mr. Lisle; and how can I be doing wrong, when I am only doing what mamma said I might? Besides, I know there is not one here who cares whether I am a Catholic or not."

Innocent falsehood! Could she have heard the

prayers that rose for her night and morning, she could not have said that.

"Father Stirling will be here directly. He is a very good man; he is the priest of Harleyford. I am sure you would like him, Mr. Lisle, though he is a priest."

"Stirling!" said the curate with a gasp.

"Yes, Father Stirling. He is a Scotchman."

"A Scotchman!"

At this moment a shout was heard from Joe, announcing the arrival of the carriages. Hardly had the gentlemen entered the room, before the rain commenced pouring down, while the artillery of heaven flashed and rolled in all the awful grandeur of a terrific thunder-storm.

CHAPTER VIII.

NO sooner had the new-comers entered the room than Marion, the storm, the strangers surrounding him, were all forgotten by Mr. Lisle, who seemed absorbed in contemplating Father Stirling. His whole frame heaved convulsively, and his cheek, lately flushed by his conversation with the child, became ashy in its whiteness.

"Just in time," said Mr. Darrell; "what a flash!"

All stood silent with awe, as a peal of thunder seemed to break over the house, shaking it to its foundations. Edie, pale and trembling, clung to her mother, and Dora hid her face in Miss Horton's dress, sobbing with fear. It was certainly a fearful storm, and older people than Dora and Edie grew alarmed, as the flashes of forked lightning succeeded each other in awful rapidity.

"Courage, my dear children," said Father Stirling; "remember that the danger surrounding us is not sent by the malevolence of man, or the wrath of evil spirits. It is God, our own Father, who directs every flash. Shall we not trust in Him?"

It was, at least, half an hour before the storm began to abate, during which time hardly a word was spoken.

"It is beginning to grow lighter now, I think,"

said the priest, at length, closing the breviary he had been reading. "I wonder how it is at the back," and, advancing as he spoke towards the other window, he perceived, for the first time, that they were not alone.

No, they were not alone. In the sanded parlor of the village inn, for the first time for ten long years, Father Stirling met the son of his benefactor —met the man he had loved and cherished as a younger brother, and from whom he had been separated by estrangement worse than death. Ten years had worked their will on both; had changed the stripling to a man, and matured the elder, even sprinkling his hair with gray, and yet, at the first glance each had recognized the other. For a moment not a word was spoken, till Father Stirling, recovering himself, advanced towards his early friend with outstretched hand.

"Henry!"

The arms remained folded, and save by the quivering of the mouth, the salutation was received unmoved.

"Henry," repeated the priest, "have you forgotten me?"

It was too much; the stiff arms unbent, and the hand of Father Stirling was wrung convulsively.

At this juncture Mr. Darrell chanced to turn. "Bless me!" he exclaimed to his wife, "I had not the slightest idea that any one besides ourselves was in the room."

"Yes, Mr. Lisle, the curate of Ennington; he was exceedingly polite when he first came in, but

the storm so confused me that I had quite forgot to introduce you," and she related the circumstances of their arrival at the King's Head.

"Father Stirling knows Mr. Lisle, it seems," said Marion; "how funny."

"I was not aware of it either," said Mrs. Darrell.

"I see nothing extraordinary, though, my dear," observed her husband, "that two clergymen, residing within nine miles of each other, should be acquainted."

Mr. Darrell was less wise than he imagined. The priest and the curate had been ignorant till this moment of each other's vicinity.

A light rain and a distant rumbling were all that now remained of the storm. Mr. Darrell endeavored to raise the spirits of his little ladies, and so well succeeded, that Dora forgot her fears, Marion her scolding from Mr. Lisle, and all were soon laughing heartily over his droll tales. But amid the laughter of the picnic party a different kind of conversation was going on at the further end of the room.

"And so we meet again," said Father Stirling, after the short pause that had followed their first salutation—"and so we meet again. O my friend, amid the changes and chances of ten long years, how have I prayed for this!"

A sigh was the only answer.

"I have sometimes thought of writing to you," he continued; "but the sight of a letter, long ago returned, and growing yellow in my desk, told me it would be of no avail. The memory, too, of a

door closed behind me, as I turned from the house that had sheltered me from childhood, banished every idea of revisiting Scotland. But though absent, I have still known all. Believe me, Henry, during my ten years' estrangement I have both mourned and rejoiced with you. With a sorrow that could only be exceeded by your own, did I mourn over your father's death, my generous, noble-minded guardian. Boy of sixteen as you then were, you called me ungrateful, and that for following the dictates of my own conscience. You were young and angry, Henry, and time had not tried the purity of my motives; but will you not give me credit now for having acted then, in conformity with what I felt to be the Will of God?"

"Misguided man!"

"Misguided!—then, by God Himself! But we will talk no more of this. Mine has been a hard fate, but God's holy Will be done. It is sad to see the grave close over prejudices unremoved."

"You said just now that you had rejoiced as well as sorrowed with us since your departure: when was this?" asked the curate.

"When Agnes married."

"Indeed! who told you of her marriage?"

"Herself. Two days before, she wrote and told me all. Told me how the old affection had grown into a quiet sisterly remembrance, and how Frank Gordon had gradually taken the place of the companion of her childhood; and none wrote to her, I know, a warmer, heartier letter of congratulation than George Stirling."

"She never told me this. Strange!"

"Search your own heart, and it will tell you why. Much as you had loved me as a boy, have you ever striven to close the breach in any way between your family and me?"

"Never! and while you bear the hated name of Romanist I never will. O, George, George! to think that I should live to see you in that odious garb! Stirling—the companion of my childish romps, the confidant of my later years, my elder brother a Roman Catholic priest! His fine mind degraded to the superstition of the Middle Ages, and his ingenuous character practising wiles from which the frankness of his boyish nature would have shrunk. What would his friendship avail me now? How can two hearts whose aims are devious know anything of unity? Can travellers north and south bear each other company, or vessels sail to opposite ports side by side?"

"Our roads are devious, I know; ought not our goal to be the same?"

"Yes, but it is not so. Mine is God, and you are travelling from Him. The monstrous Juggernaut of dogmatism and superstition, that man has created, hides the Essential Truth from you. You are like the Egyptians, wandering in the darkness caused by your own errors, while those of a purer faith bask in a more than summer light. George, do you remember my mother's death? Do you remember how, with her dying breath, she prayed for you with her children?"

"I do. I was thinking that you must have for-

gotten it. Perhaps at this very moment, in the land where the weary are at rest, she reads our hearts in the clearness of the beatific vision. Could souls in heaven weep, I believe she would be weeping now over such disunion."

"Say, rather, over the errors of him she had loved and cherished as her own," replied the curate. "But do you mean to say that you believe that those who are out of the pale of the Romish Church can be saved?"

"Yes, if their ignorance is invincible; and who but God can read their hearts?"

There was a long silence. Both looked steadfastly out of the window, and strangely into the past.

"Well, Henry," said the priest at length, brightening up, "I am very glad indeed that we have met at last, although you are still so hard upon me; but tell me how you came to be in such an out-of-the-way place as this?"

"I have had a curacy at Ennington from the time of my ordination, three years ago, and I came here to-day on parish matters," answered Mr. Lisle, coldly.

"During the whole of which time I have been living at Harleyford," answered the priest. "Well, we know each other's whereabouts now, thank God, and can often meet."

"Pardon me," returned the curate; "we have been strangers for the last ten years, and as far as I am concerned, I prefer that we should remain such."

"Henry, is this resentment worthy of a Christian?"

"It is not resentment. Here is my hand to prove it to you; and believe me, George Stirling, that above all men, yes, above every soul on earth, you have my pity, and shall have my prayers."

"And must we part like this? In the name of Him whose ministry we both profess, and who is the God of charity, why cannot the old friendship bind us still?"

"Because I mistrust you, thoroughly mistrust you, Stirling; I know that Romanists will countenance any means to work their ends. I have learned much in a few years, something even this afternoon, and that from a little one whose innocence and artlessness might have rendered her sacred in your eyes. But hear me, and I at least am candid; be it the business of *my* life henceforward, to circumvent the end and aim of *yours*, and such as you; for while I have life and strength, never will I cease from the combat! Adieu, and forever, unless you see the error of your ways, for then indeed shall David and Jonathan mingle, as of old. Good-by." He held out his hand.

"*Dominus tecum*," said the priest, pressing it almost abstractedly; and with a bow to the rest of the company, without so much as thinking again of Marion, Henry Lisle passed from the room, and was seen a few minutes later riding off through the restored sunshine towards Ennington.

Marion looked after him, much surprised.

"Did you tell him about Eliza, my dear?" asked Mrs. Darrell.

"No; I meant to do so, but we were talking of other things at first, and I was too frightened to think of anything during the storm. Then I could not go to him, of course, while he and Father Stirling were talking together; but I thought he would have come and spoken to me before he went away. It is very strange he should go without even saying good-by to me. He seems much vexed about something; I wonder what it is?"

"I did not observe it."

"Because you do not know him well enough, Mrs. Darrell, or else you would have seen that he was quite pale."

"Perhaps Father Stirling has been trying to convert him," exclaimed that lady, laughing, as the priest came slowly towards them.

"You are right," he replied, sadly, "though not perhaps in the sense you imagine."

"Mr. Lisle seems a very gentlemanly man," said Mrs. Darrell; "have you known him long?" Unwittingly she had touched the vibrating chord too suddenly. A deep groan burst from the priest, and sinking into a chair he covered his face with his hand.

"I shall be better presently," he whispered, "but I do not feel well."

Miss Horton motioned the children from the room, Mrs. Seymour and her daughters followed, under pretence of looking around the farm, and Father Stirling was left alone with his friends.

"You are astonished at seeing me so strangely moved, I know," said he at length; "but I will tell you all. It was Henry Lisle's father who, when I was left an orphan, took me home and adopted me as his own. His was a bereaved household; child after child had passed away in their infancy, and when I entered it, one little girl alone remained of a large family. After I had been with them two or three years Henry was born, and this boy and girl were all that Mr. and Mrs. Lisle ever reared. It would be impossible for me to describe to you the kindness of my self-constituted guardian, or the maternal affection lavished on me by his wife. Mr. Lisle was not rich, neither was I; but he husbanded my little store, and partly from his own resources, partly from mine, he gave me a liberal education, and when I was old enough received me as a partner in the firm, of which he himself was the head. Things went on quietly enough until I reached the age of six-and-twenty, when, by events I need not now particularize, the whole current of my life became changed. A desire to dedicate myself to what I then considered the ministry took possession of me, and all in which I had hitherto taken an interest grew distasteful to me. But there were ties, one in particular, that bound me to my post, and I remained at it, the prey of many a mental conflict, for two long weary years, until, in a moment of impulse, I revealed my wish to Mr. Lisle. To my surprise, although he was a staunch Presbyterian, he thoroughly approved of the idea, and so

smoothed the pecuniary difficulties that lay between me and the wish of my heart, that within two months from that time I was at Oxford. I remained there two years; you know the result. I returned to Scotland and told my adopted father all, and I shall never forget the scene. Early associations, old affections, all were forgotten; he tried arguments, persuasions, even threats, but thank God, in vain. He told me I was disgracing him, that I had no right to bring distress upon a family with whom I was united by ties as strong as brotherhood. Henry, at that time a youth of sixteen, heard my determination apparently unmoved; only I, who knew his disposition, understood his grief, as he stood motionless as a statue beside his father. 'Go,' said Mr. Lisle, as he held the door open; 'go, and may God forgive you, for I never can.' This was ten years ago. Mr. Lisle is dead, Henry is curate of Ennington, I priest of Harleyford. All are changed, or gone, or dead, except the bitterness and estrangement, and these remain still, for Henry Lisle refuses my friendship till I give up my God."

"I had no idea you were talking seriously," said Mr. Darrell, as the priest concluded; "the children were making so much noise."

"How very sad!" said Mrs. Darrell, with tears in her kind eyes.

"Yes, I feel it just now; but it will soon pass away amid the pressure of daily cares and duties. Hard work leaves us but little time for brooding over our troubles, and a good thing, too. Come,

the weather is beautiful now, suppose we go and order the carriages."

"Suppose we have tea first," said Mr. Darrell, ringing the bell; "I expect their fright has given our young people an appetite."

Mr. Darrell must have been right in his surmises, if the matter could be judged by the celerity with which the landlady's bread and butter disappeared. Then came a walk around the farm and garden, out of which the good-natured hostess picked them a round red nosegay of country flowers—flowers that people loved in those old-fashioned days, when they would have been puzzled to spell rhododendrons and fuchsias. Such a substantial bunch it was, that Emily's fingers could not compass it, with its damask roses, London-pride, rockets, stocks, and ladies' needlework, blending in rich if not harmonious coloring.

"Marion is to ride home in the gig," said Emily.

"Will you tell me a story, Father Stirling?" asked Marion.

"Tell her the one you told me, about the hermit, and the robber who turned saint," suggested Emily.

"Does Marion like stories about the saints?" asked Miss Horton.

"Of course she does," replied Father Stirling; "I hope we shall live to see her a saint herself one of these days."

"I must be a Protestant one then," said Marion, who began to think of her conversation with her pastor.

Father Stirling and his little companion main-

tained a profound silence for some time after they had started, he pursuing the gradual unfoldings of the last ten years, she thinking of Mr. Lisle, and whether he would fulfil his threat.

"Father Stirling," she said, timidly, having at length determined to tell him her troubles.

"Yes, my child."

"Mr. Lisle, the gentleman you were talking to, comes from the same place I do."

"So I believe. I suppose you know him very well!"

"Yes, I knew him for three years; he has always taken a great deal of notice of me, and he speaks to me as he likes. But I think he is very unkind in something he said this afternoon. What do you think it was?"

"How can I possibly guess?"

"He said that unless I promised him faithfully not to speak to any one about the Catholic religion during the rest of my visit, he would write to my mamma to-night."

"Did you promise?"

"No, I did not. Mamma has confidence in me, and I think that is enough, for as I told him, it might even happen that I might make very silly mistakes for want of asking a little question. But I should not like him to write to mamma. Do you think he will?"

"I am sure he will if he said so."

"It seems to me so strange that people should be afraid of being converted," said Marion, musingly; "no one would be so silly as to join a reli-

gion they did not believe was made by God, and surely if God made it, everything in it will bear looking into."

"Exactly so. Everything that comes from the hand of God will bear scrutiny; therein lies the difference between His works and man. The more powerful the microscope, the more exquisite does the insect's wing, otherwise insignificant, appear; the mite becomes a monster of magnificent proportions, and a piece of mouldy cheese a forest of majestic plants. Take, on the other hand, the works of man. Beneath the lens the finest needle is a rough hewn pike, and a piece of dainty lawn becomes coarse as the coarsest canvass. So it is with the Church of God. The more you gaze into her innermost depths, the more you will be astonished at the glory, the holiness, the perfect beauty of the whole, while in its imitations made by man, disorder, confusion, disunion, meet the wearied eye on all sides. Fair, perhaps, may they be to the naked eye; but failing, signally failing, beneath the all-revealing glass of Truth."

He had spoken more to himself than to Marion, and relapsed again into his own thoughts. After a few minutes, his reflections were again interrupted.

"Mr. Lisle is very good, but he is rather bigoted. Do you not think so, Father Stirling?"

"Yes, very good, very bigoted."

"Mamma is not so at all."

"I am glad to hear it."

"I do not think I shall ever be a Catholic," pursued Marion; "but somehow I fancy I shall not

always be what I am now. I do not think our religion is right in some things."

"You have as good a right to judge it as any one else," said the priest, looking much amused.

"People must do what they think to be right," continued the child. "If mamma told me always to wear a blue dress, or a red one, I could do that easily to please her, however much I disliked it; but if she told me to believe a red one blue, or a blue one red, it would be impossible. With regard to believing or disbelieving anything she wished, I could no more do that than I could see at this moment two horses before me instead of one. For religion cannot be what we wish or like; it must be what it really is to us."

"Yes, but you know that there is such a thing as believing, and yet being ashamed to own our belief. Many people would be content that you should believe what you liked, if you would only keep it to yourself. But then this is really denying God. Do you not think so?"

"Yes, of course, and then he will deny us. If I were to change my religion though, mamma would not be my greatest dread."

"Who, then? Mr. Lisle?"

"No; though I should dread him more than mamma. I mean my brother Edward."

"Your brother! I thought you were an only child."

"I am mamma's only child, but I have a half-brother who has always lived in India. I really think, from all I have heard, that he is as good as

any one can be. He is coming to England some day, and I cannot think what he would say if he found Golden-hair a Puseyite, or anything else but the firm Protestant he thinks her."

"A Puseyite!" cried Father Stirling; "why, whatever put that into your head?"

"O, myself," replied the child, gravely; "there seems too much in the Catholic Church, and not enough in ours, and so I have been thinking I should like to be a Puseyite."

"So much for private judgment," cried the priest, laughing heartily. "O, dear! O, dear!"

"What are you laughing at, Father Stirling?"

The question was not answered, but there came instead a crash of a falling vehicle, the shriek of a child, the plunging of a frightened horse. When Mr. Darrell reached the spot Father Stirling was lying powerless, with a broken arm; on a heap of stones, and unconscious near him, the warm blood trickling through her golden curls, lay Marion, white as a marble image.

It was a melancholy party that wound up the drive of the Cedars, very different from that which had issued that morning from its gates. In compliance with his desire, (for the Darrells would fain have tended him at their home,) Father Stirling was left at the Presbytery, under the care of Mrs. Seymour, until her husband, the only medical man in the neighborhood, could arrive.

"And then let him come to us," cried Mrs. Darrell, as she pressed Marion, now conscious of bitter suffering, to her heart.

"Don't cry, Emily; I shall soon be better. It does not bleed so fast now. I am afraid your dress will be spoiled, Mrs. Darrell."

"What matter that, my darling?" and again they were silent.

Hardly a moan escaped her as they carried her up stairs, and laid her in Edith's little bed. Without waiting for Mr. Seymour, Mrs. Darrell bathed the wound, which was a deep incision, and swathed the throbbing head with linen bands.

"It will not be much, I trust," said Mr. Seymour; "she will soon be all right. I wish I could say as much for the Father, but his is, I fear, a compound fracture. He must be in great pain, but all he seems to think of is, how he is to get a priest for Sunday."

"I expect my brother on Saturday," replied the lady. "I will write to him, and ask him to come directly."

"Poor Father Stirling!" said a voice from the little bed. "Do you think it was my falling on him that broke his arm?"

"No, I do not think that you would have brushed a fly off him."

Marion tried to smile, but the attempt was very sickly.

She was worse than they thought. The blow had been very severe, the weather trying, and the last few days full of excitement. Before morning she was quite delirious. Once more, too, the storm broke forth, and, roused from their sleep by the thunder, the twins arose and joined their

mother in her sad vigil beside the little sufferer's bed.

"Go to bed again, my dear children, you can do no good;" but they pleaded hard, and remained trembling at Marion's strange words. Her mother, the thunder, Rosalind, and the Puseyites, were strangely jumbled; and then she talked of Father Stirling and Mr. Lisle, every now and then raising her hand to her aching head.

"I will send for her mother in the morning," said Mrs. Darrell, who began to grow seriously alarmed. "I hope she has not started for London."

"What a sad ending to our happy day!" exclaimed Emily. "If we could only have foreseen it!"

"Ah! my child, in nothing has our Father in heaven more shown His love for us than in the thick veil He has cast over the future. Could we pierce this, we should never have a happy day."

"What a vivid flash!"

The thunder, like a peal of cannonade, rolled forth at the same moment, and then Marion grew even more excited.

"What shall I do with her?" cried Mrs. Darrell.

"Come, Emily, let us pray for her," whispered Edith.

Side by side, unmoved amid the storm and the low moans of their little friend, the twins knelt before their altar, their rosaries in their hands, and before three decades had been offered to the Mater Dolorosa, the little sufferer lay asleep in Mrs. Darrell's arms.

CHAPTER IX.

"CAN you give me Mrs. Howard's address in London?" asked Mr. Lisle, as old Turner opened the street door in answer to his summons. "I called to ask it last night, but you were out."

"Yes, sir, I was; Mrs. Jones said she would mind the house a bit for me, while I ran out for two or three little odd things, and very sorry was I when I came back, to find as how you had your walk up for nothing. Will you step in, sir?" added the old woman, curtseying.

"No, I thank you; I only want the address."

"Dear me, now I come to think, my missus forgot to give it to me. But if you'll step in a moment, sir, I'll just run over and see if Miss Leicester has got it."

"Thank you, Turner," said the clergyman, walking in. "Who do you think I saw last night?"

The old servant glanced up inquiringly.

"Your little pet, Miss Marion."

"Did you, now! The Lord love her. And how is she? if it's not making too bold."

"She looks very well, and says she is very happy. I had business at Ilcombe, and dined at the little

inn there. While I was waiting for the storm to give over, a picnic party ran in for shelter, and among them was Miss Howard."

"God bless her!" cried Turner, "for she deserves it; indeed she do."

"Yes, she is a sweet child," said the curate, thoughtfully; "you must miss her very much."

"Miss her! Bless you, sir, but the house aint the same thing without her. Of course a lady like missus has got something better to do than to talk to the likes of an old woman like me; and though Susan has a downright feeling heart, and is ready to do a hand's turn for anybody, she has what I call a glumpy sort of way with her, and says very little to any one. Miss Marion seems to do one good just to look at her, and to hear her talking to her cat, and singing about the house, for she does sing beautiful. It is not much as I knows about such things, but it seems to me as that child is very clever. You should hear her talk French with her mamma; why she rattles on just as fast as the missus herself, and she draws wonderful pretty pictures. Look at that pretty creature now a-hanging up by the side of the fireplace," she added, pointing to a crayon head; "that's all Miss Marion's doing. O deary me! she's just what her poor dear father was. He was a real gentleman."

"I did not know you had lived with the family during Captain Howard's lifetime. Sit down, Turner; see, I am making myself very comfortable," and he threw himself back in the arm chair as he spoke.

"I have lived with Mrs. Howard, sir, fourteen years come Martinmas. My poor dear husband had been a private in Captain Howard's regiment, in his young days, before ever the Captain thought of going to India. They came from the same part of the country, don't you see, and so Captain Howard took a good bit of notice of him like, and took him for his servant. O, he was wonderful fond of him! My poor man and me were a-keeping company when the master went away, and soon after we got married, and had a snug little place of our own near Portsmouth. But somehow or other things didn't go so well with us at last, and when, just fifteen years after he had gone away, he heard the master had come back again and was going to settle down in England, nothing would serve Turner, but that he must go back and live with his old master. Well, sir, the long and short of it was, that we gave up our cottage and came over here to Ennington, where Captain Howard had just bought this house. I was cook at first, until Miss Marion came—heaven bless her—and then I was nurse. And now missus keeps me like an old horse, to do what I can, which I'm afeard, sir, is very little. She gets more out of Susan's big arm in one day, than my old withered stumps can do in six."

"Ah! but you find head, Turner, do you see that?"

"Well, sir, thank you, sir; but I suppose I have had some little experience in my day. It's true that you can't put new feet on old legs, as you do

with stockings, but at the same time you can't put old heads on young shoulders."

"When did you lose your husband, Susan?"

"When missus lost hers, sir; master went out to India to see about his property out there, and to bring Master Edward to England."

"That was his son by a former marriage, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Go on?"

"Well, sir, as I was saying, he went out to India, and to please missus, who was nervous like about him, for he was subject to fits, my poor man went too. It's a sad story, sir, and of course you know it. I went up with missus to see them off, and it was a sight of a ship they went in. But a storm came on after a bit, and the Ocean Queen, as they called her, struck upon a rock, and she went to the bottom of the sea. Only two men escaped, who got into a little boat and sailed about till they were picked up by a vessel coming home."

"Mrs. Howard and you may well be attached to each other; whatever your position as mistress and servant, you are own sisters in grief."

"She is very good to me," said Turner, quietly.

"Had you never any children?"

"Yes, sir, a daughter."

There was something so altered in the voice that the clergyman started. Her tone in relating her story had been naturally mournful but there was a hollowness in this short response that made him regret the question. He remained silent.

"Yes, sir, I had a daughter once, but whether I have one still, God only knows. When we came to live here I was obliged to let her go to service in London. Well, sir, she went on very well, for I saw her when I went up to town with missus, and when my poor man died, she came to stay with me a bit while Mrs. Howard was stopping with her sister. But then she went back to her place, and I have never seen her since. She used to write and tell me how she was saving up money to take the old cottage again at Portsmouth, where she was to be a dress-maker, and I was to get a little by the garden. For you see, sir," she added, lowering her voice, "although I have been so long with missus, I do find it hard to get along with her sometimes, and in those days it was rather worse than it is now; for I was a little prudish like, and the missus was young and handsome, and Captain Howard—well, it's not for me to say—but, any way, she liked her own way, and he had let her have it. And then young missuses and old servants don't always agree, so I had a bit of a notion of leaving. But then the letters came fewer and fewer, and at last, one morning, I got a note from Lady Jane, her missus, telling me to come at once if I would save my child. I went, but I was too late. Eliza had already got married, and gone off with the valet, and from that moment to this I have never set eyes upon her. My poor, poor girl!"

"She will come back some day to you, you will see," replied the curate, in a sympathizing tone.

"If it was only for this world, sir, I feel as

though I could bear it, almost cheerful like; but with such a sin as hers unrepented of, how can I hope to meet her in heaven?"

"How do you know she is not repentant?"

"Would she not write to her old mother if she was?"

Mr. Lisle was silenced.

At this moment a knock was heard at the outer door. Turner rose to open it.

"Is Mrs. Howard at home?"

"No, sir, she went to London yesterday."

"What shall I do?" exclaimed Mr. Darrell, for it was he. "What is her address there?"

"She has forgot to leave it, sir; but if you will leave a message for her, I expect her back in a few days."

"A few days! It may be all over then."

"All over!" exclaimed the old woman with a shriek, for the first time recognizing the speaker. "Mr. Darrell, sir, is Miss Marion ill?"

"She is, indeed; in great danger, I fear."

"Come in, sir; come in, please do. O, Marion! my darling, my little one, that I was the first in all this world to nurse, to think of you dying away from your mother and old nursey!"

"But I trust in God that she may not die," exclaimed Mr. Darrell, as he entered the parlor, where Mr. Lisle, who had overheard the conversation, had risen from his seat in great alarm

"Excuse me, sir, but do I hear that Marion Howard is ill? She seemed so well last evening."

"In the midst of life we are in death," replied

Mr. Darrell, and he described the accident and its consequences.

"Is Mr. Stirling in danger also, do you think?" asked the curate so anxiously, that he seemed for the moment to have forgotten Marion.

"I trust not, but no one can hardly tell. Do you think," he added, turning to the old woman, who was sobbing violently, "that you could leave the house in charge of any one, and go back with me? It would be a great comfort to Mrs. Darrell to have you."

"To be sure I can. My fellow-servant is away for a holiday, but I will get a woman from the village, and be ready directly."

"And if you will permit me," said Mr. Lisle, "I also will intrude myself upon you this afternoon. I shall not be able to rest till I know that this poor child is out of danger."

"Come, by all means," was the response. "Perhaps in the meantime you may be able to ascertain Mrs. Howard's address from some of her friends."

"I will go to Miss Leicester's immediately," said the curate, taking up his hat.

It was a melancholy ride for Mr. Darrell, as he wended his way back, with the old servant by his side. A lovely morning had followed the storm, but both were too much absorbed in their own sad reflections to notice the beauties of nature. As Black Prince stopped before the lodge, a little boy, brown as a berry, but neat as a new pin, ran out to open the gate.

"What do you think of him?" asked Mr. Dar-

rell, looking at the old woman; for, amid all his anxiety, he had not forgotten that at that very moment a mother was passing the threshold of a long lost child, and that the little chubby face was not an alien to the good soul beside him. "Is he not fit to be a prince's child?"

"Pretty cretur!" said the old woman, looking fondly after him, as he tripped into the lodge, where Eliza, who had caught sight of the coming vehicle, sat with her face buried in her hands.

"At last! at last!" she muttered; "O, my God, this is too much!"

She had not expected her mother; the idea of her coming had not entered her mind, but she had recognized her instantly.

"O, mother!" she cried, with bitter tears, "I have sinned before Heaven and against thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy child."

Marion was still hardly sensible, though more tranquil. Mr. Lisle came and saw her, but left, unrecognized by word or glance. Towards evening consciousness returned, but found the little patient so exhausted that Mr. Seymour shook his head in reply to the anxious glances of Mrs. Darrell and old Turner.

"Would you not tell her of her danger, Mr. Seymour?" asked Mrs. Darrell.

"I tremble to say yes, but I dare not say no," replied the doctor; "this constitutes, my dear madam, the real pain of our profession. It is a hard thing to disturb the mind when the body is racked with suffering, but it is harder still to let the

soul glide away in a moral lethargy into the presence of its God. Speak to her as gently as you can."

He left to visit his other patient, who needed his services little less than did Marion.

"You yourself would tell her, would you not?" asked Mrs. Darrell, appealing to the old nurse, whose good sense and gentle manners had already won her heart.

"Indeed, I would ma'am, it would be hard to lose her; but, if she is to die, let her say at least, 'Lord Jesus, have mercy on my soul.' I will go into the other room, you will feel freer like without me. O, deary, deary me, to think it should come to this!" and the poor old soul sobbed as though her heart would break.

"Marion," said Mrs. Darrell, bending over her, "you are very ill; is there anything you would like?"

"My Bible."

"But, my dear child, you cannot see to read."

"But nursey can read to me."

"Very well. Is there anything else?"

"I should like to see Mr. Lisle, but he is too far off."

"He has been to see you, but he has gone again, love. Would you like to see Mr. Gardiner, the clergyman of the church near here?"

"Yes, please. Was I asleep when Mr. Lisle came? I wish you had awakened me."

"Very well; so we will another time, he is coming again soon."

There was a grand dinner party that night in Harleyford, and the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner were among the guests invited. The latter stood in her sylph-like dress before her cheval glass, directing her maid, who was putting certain finishing touches, while her husband fidgetted up and down the library, straightening the fingers of his gloves. The brougham was already at the door, the gray horse prancing until his harness jingled, as impatient as his master.

"A groom from Mr. Darrell's, at the Cedars, is waiting to speak to you, sir, if you please."

"Darrell! The Cedars! What on earth can he want with me?"

"If you please, sir," said Tom, from the doorway; "if you please, sir, a young lady who is stopping at the Cedars is dangerously ill, and my mistress says she would be glad if you come and see her at once. She would have written to you, but she could not leave Miss Howard when I came away, and the young ladies are too much shaken to hold a pen."

"But how is this? Is she not a Catholic?"

"No, sir; a Protestant."

"What is the matter?" asked Mrs. Gardiner, entering the room in full trim.

"A sick person, that I am afraid I must go and visit. How shall we manage, my dear?"

"Who is it? Who is ill?"

Mr. Gardiner explained.

"What is the matter with her?" asked the lady, withdrawing herself from Tom's vicinity. "Is it a fever?"

"No, ma'am; she was thrown out of a gig last night, coming from a picnic. Both she and the gentleman who was driving her had a narrow escape with their lives."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Gardiner, who was a sharp little lady, and usually spoke in jerks. "How dreadful! Well, you will go the first thing to-morrow morning, I suppose, Adolphus."

Mr. Gardiner hesitated. "Is there any immediate danger, do you know?"

"My mistress said, sir, that I was to ask you to come at once."

"Impossible!" said the lady, under her breath, and puckering her forehead at her husband. "Why, we are awfully late now!"

"What can I do, my dear?" asked the clergyman, looking at his better half. "The Cedars is not far."

"The Cedars! Why, it is not in your parish," said his wife, quickly.

"Yes it is," answered Mr. Gardiner, shaking his head dolefully. "I think I had better go. Tell your mistress I will be with her in a quarter of an hour. It is very unfortunate," he added, as the door closed behind the servant, "but we must explain matters to Lady Harley. She cannot possibly be offended."

"I don't know that; we shall see."

"Why, Helen, what would you have me do?" he asked, almost deprecatingly.

"How can I tell you?" she replied, shrugging her pretty shoulders still further out of her dress.

"All I know is, that it is about one of the most aggravating things I ever heard of. If it had been one of your own parishioners; but for one of these Catholic people—how intensely annoying!"

"What will you do, my dear? We are only wasting time now."

"I don't know; pull off my things and stop at home, I suppose;" and she began plucking angrily at her glove. "O, don't leave me alone!" she exclaimed, giving herself a sharp twist, as her husband approached with the idea of coaxing the spoiled beauty. "Any one but you would have managed some way."

"You are very cross, Helen, I am sure. I am as sorry as you are; but what do you suppose people would say if I refuse to go? It would be the town talk, especially among the Romanists and Dissenters."

"Bother the Romanists and Dissenters!"

"The only way that I can see," continued the reverend gentleman, without noticing the rejoinder, "will be for John to drive me at once to the Cedars, and then come back and bring you. You can take me up afterwards at the end of the lane. I will not stay an instant longer than I can help, and I am sure I shall be able to make it all right with her ladyship."

"Well, pray, be as quick as you can. It looks so abominably stupid to be late at a dinner party."

Marion turned languidly on her pillow as her spiritual comforter entered the room, preceded by

Mr. Darrell; but he asked no questions, she was too ill to feel curious.

Mr. Gardiner approached the bed, by the side of which Mrs. Darrell and the two girls were standing, while old Turner at some little distance, with her hands in her lap, looked the picture of silent despair. The clergyman just glanced at the mournful group, and at the pale figure extended on the bed, and then opening his book commenced to read at once.

"'Remember not, Lord—'"

"Stop a moment, sir, if you please!" exclaimed Mr. Darrell. "If you will allow them to pass, my children will leave before you begin. Nor is there any reason, my dear, why you or I should remain," he added, turning to his wife. "Turner, you will stay with Miss Marion."

"Yes, sir," said the old woman, approaching the bed.

"You will excuse us," continued Mr. Darrell in answer to Mr. Gardiner's look of astonishment; "but you are aware, I have no doubt, that we are enjoined by our creed to abstain as much as possible from assisting at the religious worship of others."

Mr. Gardiner simply bowed, but he looked unutterable things, which he was in too great a hurry to express.

"'Remember not, Lord,'" he once more commenced, as the door closed. "Have you anything you would like to say to me?" he asked, having arrived at that portion of his ritual where he was

enjoined to question the invalid with regard to his conscience, debts, and the arrangement of his worldly goods, etc.

"What did you say?" asked Marion, with the vacancy peculiar to extreme weakness.

"I asked you whether you would like to speak to me?"

"What about?"

"O, the affairs of your soul, or anything of that kind."

"No, thank you," said Marion.

"You are very ill."

"Yes, I think I shall die."

The clergyman started. "Do you not feel afraid? are you prepared? would you not like to live?"

"Just to see mamma," replied the child; "that is all. I long to be in heaven with God and dear papa. Will you reach me that crucifix down, please?"

"What for?"

"I like to have it in my hand. When I think of all Christ suffered in dying on the cross for us, the pain of my head seems so much better."

"You can have that when I am gone," said the clergyman. "You had better attend to me now; I have been sent for to pray for you."

"Have you?" said Marion. "I didn't know. Have you been here long?"

The clergyman thought of his wife, and fidgetted.

"No, not very long. Then if you have nothing to say to me I will go on."

"Please begin again, and I will listen and pray with you. I did not hear you reading at all. Nursey!"

"Yes, darling."

Mr. Gardiner was in despair.

"Come and kneel here, and pray with us, too."

The old woman hid her head in the bedclothes to smother her sobs.

"Now I am ready," said the child, folding her hands. "Please go on," and for the third time Mr. Gardiner recommenced the office of the visitation of the sick.

"Thank you," said Marion, when he had finished; "I like that very much, but I should like you to pray for me your own self better. Will you?"

The Rev. Adolphus Gardiner stood aghast; he could about as easily have preached an extemporaneous sermon. Besides, what would his wife say, and Lady Harley think? And yet, how refuse?

"Do you not think we have had talking enough for the present?" he asked. "You must not be excited too much, you know."

Marion only made large eyes at him.

"If I were to stay with you, though," he continued, "I should only read to you some other prayers out of this book, for they are far more beautiful than any I could compose."

"Are they?" asked Marion.

"Yes; if you like I will read one for a sick child. There," said he, at the conclusion, with a deep sigh of relief at having done his duty, "I

think that will do for to-night. Go to sleep now, there's a good child, and I will call and see you to-morrow. Will you pass me my hat if you please?"

Turner obeyed, and the physician of souls hurried off to join his wife.

They were late, but all was excused on the plea of pastoral duties. Indeed, the story of the little girl and her accident, the request for the crucifix, and the "wretched bigotry" of her popish friends, made quite an interesting little episode in the conversation of the dinner table.

Another night passed in anxious watching, and Marion was better. When Mr. Seymour announced that all danger was over, old Turner smiled again, and the twins danced in their glee, and said rosaries by the dozen in thanksgiving. When Mr. Lisle came again, the bandage had been replaced by a plaster, the curls smoothly arranged, and Marion almost looked herself again. She knew him now, and a look of deep gratitude smiled from the blue eyes, as he approached.

"Do you know that Father Stirling's arm was broken at the same time I was hurt?"

A look of pain passed over the curate's face.

"Yes, poor fellow!"

"Will you go and see him?"

"No, not to-day. To-morrow, you know, will be Sunday, and I must go home to prepare. Dr. Stebbing is away, so I shall have to preach both morning and evening, and I have been so uneasy about you, that I have hardly thought about my

sermon yet. If I do not go back soon, the people will go sermonless to-morrow, and you know that would never do."

Marion smiled. "I shall go sermonless, I am afraid, for many Sundays."

"I hope not; no, the fever has left you now, and I trust you will soon get well. I met Mr. Seymour as I came, and he says you are going on very nicely."

"Did he say anything about Father Stirling?"

"He says he is very ill; but," added he, his generosity triumphing over his reluctance to praise him, especially to Marion, "as patient as an angel."

"Just what I should have thought," said Marion.

"Well, good-by, my child, for I must run away. Now, listen to me. Do not, for God's sake, let them talk to you of religion. Marion, I would not deceive you! However bright their religion may appear, believe me, it is false. Your own pure simple faith is truth; but you are so young, so impulsive, so easily impressed. O, would to God that you had never come here, where everything around you combines to make the great lie alluring! Look at that little altar: pretty, I grant you, very pretty; but," he added, lifting up the cloth as he spoke, "what is it, after all? A wooden table! Would that I could expose to you the worthlessness of their larger mummeries, as easily as I thus lay bare the legs of Mrs. Darrell's altar." He dropped the curtain as he spoke, and returned to Marion. "Good-by, my child, till Monday."

He had not long left the house when a letter

arrived from Mrs. Howard, telling Marion of her intention of bringing her the following week. She had little anticipated the tale of disaster she was to receive in reply, sad enough to a mother's heart, even when softened by the exquisite tact and delicacy of Mary Darrell's pen.

"Mrs. Darrell, I have been lying and thinking about one thing almost all the time you were at church," said Marion to her kind hostess, as she sat beside her next day, while Turner went down stairs to her dinner.

"What is it, love? Tell me."

"Why, about Eliza. I do so want her to see her mother. I talked to nursey just a little about it this morning, to see what she thought."

"And what did she say?"

"She thinks she is dead, or else ashamed to write. O, Mrs. Darrell! will it not be a delightful thing to tell her? Sometimes I can hardly lie still for thinking of it!"

"Now, Marion, if you excite yourself you will be ill again."

"I will not, really, but just listen; dear Mrs. Darrell, don't you think they might see each other this afternoon? It would do more towards making me well again, than all the medicine Mr. Seymour could give me in a month."

"I shall tell Mr. Seymour how lightly you value his skill."

"O, Mrs. Darrell! I don't mean that. I am very grateful to Mr. Seymour, for I think if he had not taken care of me, I should have died.

But I do so long to see Turner and Eliza together."

"Very well, then, so it shall be. I will send Eliza in to see you, with her little boy; that will be a good excuse. Now, remember, you promise to be calm."

"Yes," said Marion; but she looked much the reverse.

When Turner returned, Mrs. Darrell went down to her brother, who had arrived from Dublin only the day before, and to whom she was desirous of devoting as much of her time as possible. He had already said the two masses, and preached, and now had only a short time for a chat before the afternoon services.

"This is not much of a holiday for you, William," observed his sister.

"What! do you call this work? for shame of yourself, then!" exclaimed the good-natured Irishman.

Turner was more than usually cheerful this afternoon. Marion was out of danger, and her mistress knew, or soon would know of the state of her little girl. "Shall I read to you, deary?" she asked, as she smoothed down her clean apron, and put on her spectacles.

"Presently, but I want to talk to you first, nursey; I have been building castles in the air."

"What does that mean, child?"

"Why, fancying things, you know. I have been fancying Eliza coming back, and living in a pretty cottage, with a nice garden and two little children."

"Laws, Miss Marion, what's the use troubling that poor little head of yours with things what's never likely to be? I shall never see her any more, deary."

At this moment Emily entered on tiptoe.

"Marion," she asked in a subdued voice, "would you like to see the lodge-keeper? she has asked after you so often."

"Very much; please let her come."

In a few minutes Eliza entered the room, leading little Charlie, her eldest boy, by the hand. To meet her mother face to face was more than the poor thing could do, and she slipped around the bed in such a way as to place herself by her side. Turner, who was busy arranging the pillows, hardly noticed her, much to Marion's disappointment; and the poor woman stood trembling, after her first low salutation of the invalid, with her back half turned to her mother, trying to summon courage to throw herself into her arms.

"Come here, Charlie," said Marion. "Come here, and kiss this dear, kind old grannie."

It was a term Marion often used in fun to the old woman, who without noticing it, seated herself and took the chubby little rogue on her knee.

"Well, you are a pretty fellow!" she exclaimed, looking at him in unfeigned admiration. "Do you know, Miss Marion, but his eyes is wonderful like my poor man's?"

She did not observe, as Marion did, how convulsively a pair of thin hands were pressed together beside her.

Many were the questions put by the old woman to the little prattler, for the sake of hearing him talk. And all the time his mother kept her position, her eyes half averted, looking through the window into the tree-tops, and silent heavy tears falling one after the other upon the folded hands.

"He's a dear little fellow, and does credit to his mother, that he do," exclaimed the old woman at length. "He's been well brought up. So much the better. 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he shall not depart from it.' People should never spoil children. It is far easier, I know, to let them have their own way at the time; but depend upon it, it's better to be a little hard on young people, than to have them live to be hard upon you, as I know to my cost. Won't you sit down, ma'am? Go and fetch a chair for mammy, there's a dear."

A convulsive sob echoed through the room, and in another moment Eliza was at her mother's feet.

"Mother! mother!"

Reader, shall we describe it, or shall we draw a veil over the scene so like that jubilee of the angels rejoicing over the sinner doing penance?

"My child! my child! now I can die happy!"

* * * * * * * *

"Now, nursey, didn't I tell you Eliza would come back again?" cried Marion, emerging at last from under the bedclothes with very red eyes. "Am I not a little prophet?"

"Yes, that you are," cried the woman, kissing her fondly; "but I tell you what it is, deary, we

shall have you ill again, and that will never, never do."

"The twins kept watch that evening beside the little invalid, and there was a very long talk at the lodge. That talk might have made one think of April weather, but there were more smiles than tears, more sunshine than showers, after all, gentle reader.

Marion made rapid progress from this afternoon. Mrs. Howard arrived in great alarm on the Tuesday morning, but found her child much better than her fears had allowed her to anticipate; and after spending a week or two at the Cedars, she found her sufficiently recovered to return with her to Ennington.

It was with sincere pleasure that Mr. Lisle welcomed Marion home, for he had trembled for her firmness. His kindness to her child completely obliterated from Mrs. Howard's mind every trace of her own angry feelings towards him, and in a very short time, what in the beginning had been simply social intercourse between the curate and his parishioners, ripened into a deep and lasting friendship. In the expressive language of the Germans, Mr. Lisle became a "house friend;" and now that little Marion was once more actually beneath his eye, he no longer feared for her orthodoxy. He felt that she had been slightly touched by the dreaded evil, as he phrased it to himself, but finding that she resumed the even tenor of her old life apparently unaltered, he never spoke to her or her mother on the subject. Notwithstanding

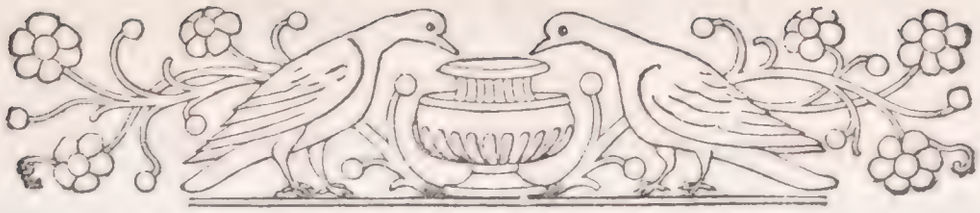
Mrs. Howard's "religious horror," Marion soon after became a district visitor, and Sunday-school teacher, and all traces of anything like a leaning towards Catholicism so entirely disappeared, that when, the next summer, the twins spent a day or two with Marion at Ennington, they returned quite disappointed to their mother, with the intelligence that Marion was quite, quite Protestant.

"God's ways are not man's ways," said Father Stirling; "Marion will be a Catholic yet."

"If it had not been for the accident you and she met with, she might have been one now," sighed Emily.

"Cannot the same God who willed the accident, will also her conversion in His own good time?" asked the priest.

Could they have read the heart of Marion, they would have seen the relics of more than one conversation lying secretly germinating in the depths of that little spirit, and calm, strange thoughts, growing with her growth, and strengthening with her strength, seeming to whisper even among the things she loved best in her religion, "This is not thy rest."



CHAPTER X.

FIVE years had passed since the visit to the Cedars, and it was the twilight of a December afternoon. Marion, still the bright-haired Marion of her childhood, was sitting musing over the fire in the snug little parlor at Ennington, all alone, for Mrs. Howard had not returned from a call on her old friend and adviser, Dr. Bernard. Snow had been falling lightly, and was lying fairy white on the garden paths and beds, but the fuchsias and geraniums stood up black and gaunt in their grim prison clothes, and everything looked cheerless in the winter mist. Marion had been watching at the window for her mother, enjoying the licensed idleness of the twilight; but she had grown so cold and sad withal, in thinking of fireless homes and homeless little ones, that she was glad to shut out the dreary landscape. So she had drawn the crimson curtains, stirred the fire into a blaze, and pulling her mother's stool before it, sat down thereon to dream.

Many and varied thoughts passed through the busy little brain as she wandered back in spirit through the gradual unfoldings of the last five years. One could not have imagined they would

have furnished much food for thought, and yet in her inner life, that life that lies so deep down in the nature of us all, was hidden many a little treasure-house, known to herself alone. First came her visit to the Cedars, with its shadowy remembrance of soul-stirring thoughts, warm hearts, bodily pain, and Father Stirling. Next, a summer spent at home, when the twins had visited her, and of which the distinguishing feature was the novelty of parish work, and the visits of Mr. Lisle. Then the two summers at the London school, and the holidays at her aunt's, amid London sights, and sounds, and gayeties. These things passed through Marion's mind, smiled at, or sighed over, as the case might be; but it was over the last bright summer-tide that she really lingered—lingered in thought, until the fire burned almost down, and startled her with a rush of falling ashes; and when it was replenished, and once more sparkled merrily, still she thought on, while Tyrza in her lap purred forth his very heart in a low complacent hum. She was a sweet little picture, in her dark merino dress, relieved by the daintiest of little collars, as the soft fire light flickered upon her rounded neck and glossy ringlets. But what thought is it that shines at this moment in the bright blue eye? Has Golden-hair a secret? Crosses and candlesticks have been sinking lower and lower for a long time now, until the idea of them has almost faded, and she has lived to laugh merrily with even Mr. Lisle about her Puseyite notions. She is thoroughly "Low-church now," she says, and the old secret

is one no longer. Has she another? She could not tell you if she would, but there is something, sunny and shadowy by turns, rooted in her very nature, bound with her being for life or death, and yet unwhispered in the deepest recesses of her heart. She has changed, but she does not see it; she acts with other aims, but she does not know it; she lives with another life, but she does not feel it; for in all her thoughts and words and actions, Marion thinks and speaks and moves only in Henry Lisle. And yet she deems she values him as her mother's friend, and would crimson to the temples, even in that lonely parlor, could she suspect the existence of an affection for which she would, in this very moment, lay down her life. Golden-hair is like the little flower of which the poet sings, she "must be wooed, and not unsought be won."

A knock at the door startled her from her reverie.

"There is mamma, at last," she exclaimed, giving the fire an energetic stir, that a blaze might welcome her. "I wish tea was on the table," but it was a very firm footfall that passed along the passage, so firm, that the young girl stopped in her progress towards the door. It opened, and two minutes later, Marion Howard and the curate of Ennington were seated *tête-à-tête* before the fire.

"And what has Golden-hair been doing all this dull afternoon?"

"Thinking and thinking here by myself, until I feel half stupid."

"I hope not," said the gentleman, laughing; "we could ill spare one of the wisest heads in Ennington."

"I never thought before, you knew how to pay a compliment. I wish you would take mamma's large chair and make yourself comfortable. Turner will bring in the lights directly."

"An event for which I am in no way anxious," said Mr. Lisle, accepting her invitation to change his chair, and warming his hands; "you know my penchant for fire light."

"Yes, I like it very much. It is so dreamy."

"It is, when one is alone, and can give one's self up to its influence. On that account it is a dangerous luxury for young people, as is everything that helps to make them romantic and sentimental."

"Are romance and sentiment dangerous, Mr. Lisle?"

"I think so."

"I am sorry for that," returned Marion, "because it really appears that our every-day business is the prose of life, and that the little flashes of sentiment that come to enliven even the dullest lives from time to time, constitute its poetry. Our existence would be hard and dry without them. But really, in these days, nothing that is not hard, dry and common sense, as it is called, is understood. And yet, as mamma says, let people call it romance, sentiment, ideality, or what they will, it is only the power of extracting the beautiful from the commonplace, which God has given to every man if he

will only use it, that people exclaim against. I know I seem to be talking nonsense, but," she continued earnestly, "what I mean, I feel so deeply. Of course, Mr. Lisle, I know that mine is a very ordinary mind, and yet I should be sorry to pass through life without some appreciation of the exquisite harmony of all things in the world around us, that man calls beauty. How would our little home look, do you think, if the flowers were cleared out of the garden, and cabbages and potatoes planted in their stead? Yet that is just my idea of souls without sentiment."

"And such it will remain, you obstinate little lady; like most quiet people, it takes a world of power to make you alter your notions. My opinions are not perhaps quite as matter-of-fact as you imagine, but I have a horror of anything exaggerated, anything, for instance, like mysticism, which is almost fatal to the character, as enthusiasm is to religion. Simplicity is the touchstone to truth."

"Ah, now you are beyond me. I know no more about mysticism than Tyrza, but I cannot see why enthusiasm should be wrong in religion."

"It is not in conformity with the meek and gentle spirit of the Gospel," replied Mr. Lisle, "which falls like light, silently irradiating all."

"But the Spirit of God is fire," said Marion, looking at him, "and once fell on man like the noise of a mighty rushing wind. Was not this something like enthusiasm? You will laugh at me again, I know, but I cannot help thinking

that when God took away Eden, he left some of its beautiful flowers behind, which they find in Eastern lands even now, and that when he punished our race, he left one great impulse of fallen man, and that was enthusiasm. O! Mr. Lisle, really, really this is the grandest thing in man's whole nature, and it cannot be wrong to bring it into religion. Who can contemplate God in his perfections, and not feel enthusiastic?" and Marion's eyes kindled, and her lips trembled with excitement.

"You are a singular compound of simplicity and earnestness, Golden-hair. It is strange that you and I get on as well as we do together, for really we seldom agree."

"Mr. Lisle!"

"It is difficult to express to you exactly what I mean," he replied, "for it is only an opinion I have formed from little things you have said to me at various times, some of them even as a child. I remarked it, I remember, for the first time, in a chat we had together about five years ago in the churchyard, one Sunday evening. Do you remember it?"

"Yes, very well; but I am surprised that you do. You have a good memory."

"For some things, yes—at any rate I remember our conversation on that evening very well, and the wish you then conveyed to me in your childish words, that religion had something in it more tangible."

"I sometimes wish so still. I get lost in a

species of rapture when I contemplate the Humanity of Christ. His infant life, His childhood, His thirty years before His ministry, have a wonderful fascination for me; the more so, I sometimes think, from the veil drawn over them by Scripture. I wish we knew something of that silent life at Nazareth."

"Marion," said the curate, "need I say more in answer to your question, asking in what way you mingle religion and imagination? Are you not desiring to lay bare those things that Infinite Wisdom has involved in shadow? Be reasonable, my dear young friend, and be content with those fords and shallows through which the 'Sun of Righteousness' plays on the ground beneath, or you will wander beyond your depth, and be carried away by the current. And that would break my heart."

The last words were spoken in an almost whisper, but they reached Marion, who lifted Tyrza again into her lap, and looked gravely into the fire.

"Christmas is coming fast," said the clergyman, cheerfully, not sorry to change the subject.

"Very."

"How are you going to spend it? Here, as usual?"

"Mamma is going to London, and she wants me to go with her. But somehow I would rather not."

"Why?"

"Because, if we go, it will be to visit my Aunt Burrowes. She is very rich, and her daughters

are merry, dashing, fashionable girls, about my own age, rather what some people describe as 'fast.' Altogether, my life in London with them would be just the reverse of what I like. Even as a child, the excitement of my holidays was not altogether pleasure to me, but I expect that what then was only distasteful in London life, would be positive misery now. Of course I am 'out,' and should be whirled off to operas, theatres, balls, parties, concerts and conversations, till the country girl's brain would be in a perfect whirl. Besides, is it consistent to be engaged as I am, in district visiting and Sunday-school teaching at one time, and at another to be mingling in such constant dissipation, as I must, if I visit London with mamma? It would be only for a few weeks I know, but that would be quite enough to unsettle me for a year."

"By all means remain at home, then," said the curate, anxiously. "One season in London has been the narrow strait through which many a young and earnest soul has been hurried on to the great sea of worldliness, never again to find the bright haven of its childhood. O, Vanity Fair! Vanity Fair! what fearful victories it has won!"

"And yet there is one way in which I can escape it," said Marion, "and I think you will approve of it even less than my going to London."

"What is that?"

"I have another invitation, a previous one, that I could accept."

"Why not do so, then?" asked the curate.

Marion's only answer was a very mischievous smile.

"Why should you not accept that invitation, Marion?" continued Mr. Lisle, looking puzzled.

"So I can, only—Mr. Lisle, I cannot help laughing, please don't look so serious. Where do you think it is to?"

"How can I tell?"

"To the Cedars!"

Scylla and Charybdis! The frying-pan and the fire! Never was man on the horns of such a dilemma.

"Which invitation shall I accept?" asked Marion, whose eyes were brimful of mischief, for she knew in what horror he held London society, while on the other hand, the Darrells—O what were they not?

"I see no necessity for accepting either," he returned, crossly; "stay at home."

"What, all by myself? I did not think you were so cruel?"

"Are you sure Mrs. Howard is going?"

"Quite."

"And could you not really make yourself happy for a few weeks here, with your schools, and district, and books—and—"

"My cat, I suppose, for that is all I have besides."

"No, no, but seriously."

"Seriously, I should be very miserable on Christmas day, with my roast-beef and plum-pudding all to myself. No, Mr. Lisle, it must be one or the

other, and the question resolves itself into whether I shall go to my aunt's, or to the Cedars,—which shall I do?"

"In plain words, do I advise you to run the risk of becoming a worldling, or a Romanist?"

"Neither one nor the other, I hope; but I think a visit to Aunt Burrowes might really be a source of temptation to me, for I am naturally excitable; but with regard to Romanism, having been once just a little bitten, I will take good care to keep myself out of harm's way. *'Un chat echaude craint l'eau chaude.'*"

"Well, I am sorry to say, it is a matter on which I cannot advise you. I suppose when you have made up your mind which invitation you will accept, you will tell me. You are very wilful!"

"I do not see it," she replied, this time very seriously, for she saw that he was pained. "I have so much confidence in you," she continued, "that I would follow your advice if it only entailed a dull Christmas for myself; but we must not offend my aunt, which I certainly should do were I to refuse her invitation without a sufficient reason. I cannot tell you how much I shrink from the bustle and gayety of her house, while at Mrs. Darrell's I will be almost as quiet as at home. I am older now—I should hope, wiser—and protected by my little black book, what can I fear?"

"That little black book! Marion, you little know to whom that once belonged."

She looked at him with a strange little creeping at her heart.

"Shall I tell you an o'er true tale?" he asked. "Long, long ago, I had a friend, whom I loved as dearly as my own life"—he paused, more affected than Marion had ever seen him.

"Never mind, Mr. Lisle, it pains you to tell me, I can see."

"It does; still I would rather tell you, for somehow there is a kind of consolation in thinking of days that were very happy, even when they are gone forever. When I think of our childhood, passed in the same home, of our deep affection, and still more, when I remember the tie that was to have united us, I feel—but let us not talk of that," and he paused again.

"Did she die?" asked Marion.

"She! who?"

"The lady you are speaking of," said Marion, who felt very strange.

"I was not speaking of any lady, Golden-hair," exclaimed the curate, an exulting twinge running through every fibre, notwithstanding his emotion, "but of an orphan boy many years older than myself, who was to have married my sister Agnes."

It was very strange that the tables should have been turned so soon, but it is a fact that the tears came into Golden-hair's eyes, just as the curate began to smile like a sunbeam.

"And did *he* die?" she asked, her confusion permitting no further attempt at originality than consisted in changing the gender of her nominative.

"Would to God he had, while clothed in his 'Robe of Righteousness.' No; he went to Oxford,

and then, just as he was about to return, rich in honors, to those waiting so impatiently at home, he went to hear a Romanist preacher. From that moment, intellect, love, gratitude, honor, all lay prostrate at the feet of the Moloch of Superstition. He became a Papist. He gave up my father's protection, my sister, my own long-tried brotherhood. And for what? To follow a cold, heartless system he does not believe. At last, separated from all that he had loved, he put the finishing stroke to his isolation, and cutting himself off irrevocably from human love and human ties, he became a priest."

"And have you ever seen him since?"

"Once, in your presence, I met George Stirling, after ten years' separation, in the little inn at Ilcombe."

"Mr. Lisle! Was Father Stirling your old companion?"

"He was."

"And you never saw him until the day you met at Ilcombe, when he and I were afterwards so nearly killed in driving home?"

"Never; nor have I seen him since."

"And my little Bible really belonged to him? Who could have imagined it!"

"Yes, it was my sister's gift to him in happier days. I found it among some books and papers he had left behind, and knowing that he had no further use for the Word of God, retained it. Did you never notice the initials, 'From A. L. to G. S.' on the fly-leaf?"

"Often, and wondered what they meant."

Both were silent. Marion dared not speak her thoughts, but her remembrance of Father Stirling was still so vivid, that she felt persuaded that however he might have been misguided, he was at least sincere, and sympathized with him, notwithstanding Mr. Lisle's description of his heartlessness, far more than that gentleman would in any way have approved.

"Do you not think it was a sacrifice to him to give up all those he loved?" she asked.

"I suppose so, unless he had grown quite unnatural."

Mr. Lisle knew nothing of the supernatural. One eye alone had witnessed the early conflicts of the Oxonian, as he turned from home, respect, and error, to solitude, contempt, and God.

"Father Stirling!" ejaculated Marion again and again. "You and Father Stirling early friends! Who could have thought it!"

At this moment Turner entered with the lights, and Mr. Lisle rose to take his leave.

"Will you not stay to tea?" asked Marion. "I expect mamma in directly."

"Not this evening, thank you. I am engaged to meet Dr. Stebbing on business for an hour or two."

"You understand my position now, do you not?" asked Marion, as Turner closed the door. "You will not be vexed with me in your own mind, for you see I cannot do as you would have me."

A slight pressure of the hand he held was the only response to the question.

"I wish I could follow you everywhere, Golden-hair, to shield you from every breath of error."

"As a guardian angel?" she asked, looking up into his face.

"Little Riddle!" thought he, as he once more took his way through the darkening street. "But how could she read what I have been so anxious to conceal? Sweet little Golden-hair!" and the curate walked on briskly through the snow.

"Mamma," said Marion, later in the evening, "I think, if you do not mind it, I should rather go to the Cedars than my aunt's."

"Of course, my dear, I should like to have you with me; but do just as you please."

"Well, for one thing, you see, mamma; it would be a saving of expense if I went to Harleyford, for I must have so many things if I go to London; and then I am only eighteen, and I hardly feel old enough for a gay life yet."

"Well, Marion, just as you like; please yourself, and you will please me."

"Then I will go to the Cedars, for the Darrells have asked me so often, and they are such good, kind people. How tenderly Mrs. Darrell nursed me after my accident!"

"Very well, then, suppose you write at once, and accept the invitation. You will, at any rate, keep Christmas in right old English style."

"What will Mr. Lisle do without us?" asked Marion. "He has dined with us for the last two or three Christmas days."

"Go to the Doctor's, perhaps; at least, I hope

so. If I thought he would be alone and dull, I should be very sorry, for he seems to me almost like my own son now."

That night Mr. Lisle sat in his bachelor parlor all alone, in a very discontented mood. Never had he felt so disinclined to get his own slippers, make his own tea, and keep his own company. His meal was a very dull one, and soon dispatched. Then he looked at his writing-desk, but it was too much trouble to get it; he took up a book, but dubbed it detestably dry: certainly the reverend gentleman was very difficult to please. He looked around his little room, he did not know why, but never had it looked so half swept, half dusted, half arranged. Perhaps he was mentally comparing it with another, in the comfort of which he had not long since basked. At last, tired of doing nothing, he seated himself on a chair before the fire, put his legs one over the other, and lighted a cigar. The discomforted brow grew smooth once more, under the influence of the "fragrant weed," and a pleased expression stole over his wearied face, as he conjured up many a pretty vision in the graceful wreaths of smoke that curled lightly above his head. By the time his cigar had burned out his fire had burned down, and the chilly air began to creep in through the shaking old window frames. But a very sunny smile was on the curate's face, for a very bright hope was in his heart.

"Yes, I think she may be trusted even at the Cedars now," he muttered; "and when she returns, things will be more settled with me, and I will

speak to her." After which cabalistic speech he took up his candle, and dreamed that night of a living half promised him in the south. And a very strange dream it was, too, for he thought the mistress of the new parsonage was sweet little Golden-hair.

CHAPTER XI.

"O, Christmas is a merry time,
When old and young together join;
Then let our hearts with rapture glow,
Nor mind the nipping frost or snow."

SO sang Joe Darrell, as he sprang down the stairs, three at a time, to go and bring Marion from Ennington the morning before Christmas Eve.

"Good-by, girls!" he exclaimed, peeping in at the dining-room door, where his sisters and Dora Seymour were busy with their decorations. "Any final commands? I am off to Ennington."

"What a cold ride you will have," said Edith.

"Marion will, I am afraid; as for me, I am cast iron; nothing hurts me. A pretty fellow I should be for a gale at sea, if I couldn't stand a nip from Jack Frost."

"You will take care of Marion, won't you?" asked Emily. "Wrap her up well."

"Trust me for that; I have had the buffalo robe, and I don't know what besides, put into the trap on purpose for her."

"You are a dear old fellow, Joe; be as quick back as you can, I am anxious to see her. I wonder if is she is as pretty as she bade fair to be," and

Emily, the same merry little spirit as of old, tripped back to her decorations.

"When does Joe's ship start?" asked Dora.

"In about a month," said Emily, with a sigh.

"And how long will it be before he comes back again?"

"The same time as before, three years."

"He must have seen a great alteration in you and Emily."

"In Edith, because she is so tall, but not much in me."

"You are certainly not very big, even now," returned Dora, smiling at the diminutive fairy-like figure beside her.

"Little and good," said Emily. "You know the old saying, that precious things are always in small parcels?"

"How old are you, Emily? I always forget."

"We are sweet seventeen; a year younger than you and Marion, and two years younger than the majestic Jessie."

"What a shame, Emmy!" cried Miss Seymour. "Whoever put it into your head to give me such a title as that?"

"Because you look so dark and queen-like, with that red camelia that Joe fastened in your hair."

"Silly boy!" exclaimed Jessie, taking it out and throwing it on the table. "I had forgotten all about it."

The words were carelessly, almost haughtily, spoken, but a few minutes afterwards the red camelia had disappeared from the table, and that

night one very like it stood in a glass on Jessie Seymour's toilet, and received a vast amount of attention.

"Jessie is very handsome," said Edith, as Emily and Miss Seymour passed into the hall.

"I can well imagine that some persons find her so. For my own part, I consider Emily very much prettier."

"One can hardly compare them," replied Edith; "they are as different as red and white roses."

"They are both very good, I think," said Dora. "As for Emily, she is almost my idea of a little saint."

"Is she, Dora? Most persons think her so merry and full of fun. Jessie told me the other day that she had hardly ever seen her serious in her life."

"Jessie went too far there, as she often does. Papa used to call her Miss Hyperbole, when she was a child. I should like to know who could say her face was anything but serious in church. Did you ever watch her?"

"Very often."

"What do you think I sometimes fancy?"

"What?"

"That Emily will be a nun. I have thought so for a long time—ever since she was about fourteen years old."

"Suppose I tell you that I have felt *certain* of it ever since she was a child."

"Have you really, Edith?"

"Yes; and I expect every day to hear her say,

'Let me go into a convent.' Mind, I betray no confidence in saying this, for we have never in our lives mentioned this subject. I sometimes fancy that mamma thinks so."

"And how would you like it?"

"O, Dora, if it were not that God, who calls her, will send us strength to bear the parting, I think I should die. I cannot realize such a thing, try as I will."

"Do you think she would enter our convent—I mean that one where we were at school?"

"No; I believe from many things, she would choose a strict order, a cloistered one probably."

"Impossible, Edith, with her disposition."

"Well, we shall see. If Father Stirling could speak, he could surprise us, I have little doubt."

"Apropos of Father Stirling, Edie, how pleased he will be to see Marion again; though, poor man, his recollections of her visit cannot be altogether pleasant."

"You mean on account of his accident."

"Yes; how patiently he bore it through, but he was a whole year without saying Mass. Papa says he must have suffered dreadfully, the bone was so splintered."

"I believe he would rejoice in any suffering," replied Edith, "thinking it brought him nearer to our Blessed Lord. But the girls are calling us, they are going to papa's study. Come."

It was a very cold ride from Ennington to the Cedars, but the wrappers were so warm, and Joe such a merry companion, that Marion scarcely

felt it. Besides, cold as it was, it was certainly very pleasant. Black Prince seemed in a thoroughly Christmas humor, and the dog-cart bowled smoothly over the frozen ground, by the side of which boys were sliding in the gutters, and old men toiling homewards under shining loads of holly. Christmas shone in every face, echoed in every voice, and beamed in the cottage lights, that now began to twinkle like stars around them. The very stage-coach that passed was piled mountain high with hampers of Christmas presents, and the merry faces of expected visitors, of home returning wanderers, smiled through the windows, or glanced down jollily from the roof.

"Now this is what I thoroughly enjoy," cried Joe, as with a light touch of his whip he sent Black Prince careering on in a full gallop. "I sadly miss all this at sea."

"But you like sea life, do you not?" asked Marion.

"I should think I do!" replied her companion enthusiastically; "why England itself is a prison-house, after the broad Atlantic! Depend upon it, a sailor's life is the only true liberty in the world."

"Now, do you know, Joe, it seems to me quite the reverse. You cannot walk on the water, and I should feel dreadfully cramped up in the narrow limits of a ship's wooden walls, which, after all, broad as is the Atlantic you sail over, is all you have to roam about in. London is a large place, but if a man was shut up in Newgate, he would not be much the better for its size, even though he was

permitted to peep as often as he liked through the windows. I can never bear to think of the sea. I suppose because poor dear papa was drowned in a voyage out to India, and poor Turner's husband, too. By-the-by, how is dear old nursey?"

"As bright as a ninepence, if you know what a degree of perfection that implies. They are getting on very well; Eliza goes out making vanities for the ladies, Mrs. Turner minds the lodge, and the elder lad is errand-boy to a chemist in the town."

"I am so glad. I missed Turner dreadfully at first, but I am pleased she went to you; it is much better for her to be with her daughter."

"There is one thing about them will hardly please you, I am afraid; but perhaps I had better not tell you, though I don't know—I think I will leave it for the girls."

"No—tell me now, Joe, please."

"Well, Eliza has become a Catholic, and is bringing up both her children as such."

"Is it possible!" cried Marion. "What does old Turner say?"

"She was very much put out of the way at first, it seems, but Father Stirling talked her into a good temper, and though she still sticks to the Methodists and the Rev. Howler Growler, or whatever you call him, (for Mr. Gardiner's ideas were so elevated that they took away the old soul's breath,) she says that Eliza certainly has a right to please herself."

"Well, I suppose she has, but I am very sorry."

"Are you?" said Joe. "I don't think you look so very. Now, Marion, don't say bigoted things, for I have always quoted you as the most respectable little heretic I ever knew. You used to be a jolly little thing when you were a child; I hope you haven't changed. As far as face goes, I see no alteration at all. You have grown into a woman, with the same bright face and sunny curls you used to have five years ago;" and the young midshipman gazed at his companion in unfeigned admiration.

At this moment they reached the lodge gate, and the next, Marion's hand was seized and smothered in old Turner's kisses.

"Miss Marion! Miss Marion! my own blessed child! how old nursey has longed to see you!"

"That will do, that will do, Turner!" cried Joe, laughing. "Black Prince won't stand; he wants his supper. Come to the house, and you shall eat Miss Marion up if you like. See! here's a shilling each for the youngsters to keep Christmas with. Now, old fellow, go ahead."

"What a pretty couple they do make, to be sure!" said the old woman, looking after them; "but there's one in store for her better nor even him. Poor fellow! I hope he won't get to like her, for it's clear to me (and her mother too, I think) as another has her heart, leastways, he had it six months ago. And they do say, too, as how Miss Jessie Seymour is wonderful set on Mr. Joe; but one can hardly say, young folks changes so in a little time. Bless me! if that isn't four o'clock

striking! I shall have Eliza here directly, and I haven't got a cup of tea ready for her yet, and it's very certain she'll want it to warm her, poor dear, for it do be bitter cold."

"Does not this look like old times?" asked Mr. Darrell, as he gazed around the cheerful tea-table. "We only want Father Stirling and Miss Horton."

"Both of whom will, I trust, be with us on Christmas day," replied Mrs. Darrell.

"You think a great deal of Christmas, do you not, Mrs. Darrell?" asked Marion.

"Yes, my dear, I do indeed. If it were possible, I would have the grate taken out of the dining-room, and have the fire on the hearth in true old English style. The fire-place was evidently intended originally for that, but it was altered when the house was modernized."

"O, mamma, how delightful that would be!" cried Emily. "I should like to keep Christmas quite in the old way, like Squire Bracebridge in the Sketch Book."

"Well, I do not know that I quite agree with you," replied her father. "I cannot but think that a modern Christmas, with its refined and quiet amusements, is preferable to the boisterous mirth and noisy games with which our forefathers celebrated it in 'the good old times,'"

"But, papa," said Edith, "they were good old times in one sense, when they were Catholic."

"Yes, Edie—but it is too bad to introduce the subject of religion now; look at our little Protestant, how straight she is looking down her nose."

"Who, I, Mr. Darrell? No, I was only thinking I should like to ask you a question," said Marion.

"Do, my dear; I hope it will not be too deep for me, but you look so profound that I feel rather nervous."

"It is simply this. If you believe our religion to be the true one, how can you account for England, one of the most, if not *the* most Protestant nation, being at the same time the queen of all others?—for you do admit that she is this, I suppose?"

"Undoubtedly I do, and prosperous with an unrivalled prosperity! Why, Marion, I am a thorough-going John Bull—as English as I am Catholic! I believe there neither is, nor ever was, a nation in any way approaching her."

"And is not this a strange reward of error?"

"Ah, my child, here we differ; suppose I tell you that I believe England's prosperity to be the reward of her Catholicity?"

"Mr. Darrell, why England is thoroughly Protestant! No one can deny that. Protestantism is not only established by law, but it is the universal sentiment of her people."

"Hardly that, my dear, in a country numbering as many Catholics as this. But we will not quarrel about trifles; England is undoubtedly a Protestant nation, I will say Protestant to the backbone, for the sake of argument, if you like."

"Then what did you mean just now?"

"Simply this. Whatever England may be now, in these her days of heresy, there was a time, when, above all other lands, she bore the sweet titles of

the 'Isle of Saints,' and the 'Dowry of Mary.' The Church cannot err, but individually her pastors may grow faithless, and her people stray from their allegiance. Satan was an angel, Judas an apostle, Luther a monk. England, like the Israel of old, fell from her high estate, and God punished her through her most vulnerable part, her Church. Protestantism fell on her like a blight, and hid the ancient faith. For how long this punishment was adjudged to her we know not—there are those who believe that the term of God's anger is drawing to a close—we cannot say. But with this, our dreadful punishment, the wrath of God seems to have been appeased, perhaps propitiated by the prayers of her who pleaded for her 'Dowry.' He laid not His hand on the worldly prosperity of the land, that had once done such great and glorious things in His name, and sent Him so many great and glorious saints to heaven. No, Marion, my child, while the Catholic sees the names of a St. Alban, St. Cuthbert, St. Neot, St. Dunstan, St. Wulstan, St. John of Beverley, of the royal Edward and the patriotic St. Thomas, inscribed on the pages of England's history, he at least will never marvel at the existence, nor question the source of her prosperity."

Marion smiled. "I dare say yours would be a very satisfactory solution to my question, to one who believed in the intercession of saints," she remarked. "But tell me, Mr. Darrell, do you seriously believe that England will ever be Catholic again?"

"I do."

"And yet you see what a strong hold Protestantism has on the hearts of English people."

"Pardon me; it is just because I see that it neither has, nor ever had, any real hold on them, that I think so."

Marion looked down with a look even more compassionate than incredulous.

"If you could only know, Mr. Darrell!"

"Know what?"

"The great work Protestantism is doing. We had a French minister preaching at Ennington, a little time since. He spoke most beautifully in his broken English of the Church of England, and grew so enthusiastic as he spoke of Protestantism in France. It is making rapid strides there, he said, while Catholics themselves must see that their religion is losing its hold upon the French nation every day. Do you not think so? I ask, because I really want to know what you think."

"Certainly not. No one who knows France as she is, with her faithful family of priests, her monks, her nuns (especially her devoted band of Sisters of Charity), can for one moment imagine it. No one who sees, as I have seen, marble tablets of gratitude covering almost the entire walls of more than one of her churches, the crowded congregations, the numerous communions at every Mass, could for an instant say such a thing. I grant you, at first sight the irreligion of France shocks an Englishman, be he Catholic or Protestant, with her vile literature, her desecrated Sundays her many sins and scan-

dals; but at the core, France, with all her faults, is truly Catholic still. And even if this were not so, do you think the ardent temperament that had rejected our religion would embrace yours? A mighty convulsion once shook France to her foundations, bringing madness and infidelity in its train, but all the artillery of hell combined, could never make her Protestant. Remember, I know both London and Paris well; mark the difference. In London the Catholic churches are rich, even elegant, well supported, wonderfully multiplied within the last years, and wonderfully multiplying still; English in their priests, their congregations, and their style generally. They are objects of curiosity to those outside the Church, are crowded at every service by large congregations, and are visited by strangers of every denomination. In social conversation, in the pulpit, on the platform, in the press, the progress of the Catholic religion in England is the one unfailing topic that is canvassed by every shade of opinion. Now for French Protestantism. In Paris one occasionally meets with a French Protestant church, but what is it like? Ill-conducted, ill-sustained, ill-attended, exciting a little contempt from both Catholic and sceptic, and still less curiosity. A few well-built churches have been erected by the English for themselves, with English chaplains and services, but these have nothing to do with any form of French Protestantism, as they are supported by the Anglican Establishment. I can prove to you that Catholicity is spreading in England, by pointing to

zealous converts day by day swelling its ranks, to its hierarchy, to its growing power, to its literature, to the Catholic spirit that is beginning to pervade even Protestant society. Can you show any similar signs of the spread of Protestantism in France?"

"Not at this moment, Mr. Darrell, except that the clergyman I just mentioned, said at a public meeting that it was spreading. He really was a very nice man. He pleased the Ennington people so much, that he made a very good collection after the sermon."

"What for?" asked Joe.

"To buy Bibles with."

"I see; do you intend that as a proof of the spread of Protestantism in France?" asked Mr. Darrell, mischievously.

"Now, papa, that is too bad," cried Emily; "remember Marion is unsupported."

"And yet, I think if we were to retrace our conversation, you would find that it was Marion who first threw down the gauntlet."

"I dare say I did, Mr. Darrell, for I like to know what reasons Catholics give for things, even while I cannot agree with them."

The fact was, Marion disliked controversy far less than either she or Henry Lisle imagined, or she would not have found herself located at the Cedars, with so little opposition on the part of her spiritual pastor and master.

"While the girls are at Mass I will run down and see old Turner," said Marion to her kind hostess, the next morning after breakfast.

"Do so, my dear; the old soul will be quite fidgety till she sees you. You must not stay too long, though, for Joe wants to take you all to see some skating on the other side of Harleyford."

"I will get ready at once," cried Marion, jumping up. "Is not Mass later than when I was here before?"

"Yes, dear, it is always at nine in the winter. It is inconvenient for us, but Father Stirling finds that it suits the generality of his congregation better than an earlier Mass, so he does not mind fasting a little longer to accommodate them."

"Fasting! What do they want him to fast for, poor man?"

Mrs. Darrell laughed one of her own musical Irish laughs. "O, they have nothing to do with that, Marion, but a priest cannot eat or drink anything before he says his Mass."

"Why not?"

"Do you not know what the Mass is? or, rather, I should say, do you not know what *we* believe the Mass to be?"

"Yes; a solemn service, the most solemn service of your Church."

"Your answer is right as far as it goes," replied Mrs. Darrell. "But I must not stop to chat with you now, for Betsy never fancies the Christmas dinner complete unless I literally have a 'finger in the pie;' but if you will remind me at some time, I will tell you what we really believe. I like you to understand, even while you criticise our religion."

Marion kissed the sweet, motherly face, and tripped off to the lodge.

"O, Miss Marion! I did think you never were a-coming! I felt quite disappointed like, when I saw the young ladies go out without you, till I began to think, perhaps, you were coming to see me instead.

"Why, of course, I was coming to see you," said Marion, kissing her reproachfully. "Well, nursey, so you are really happy now! Where is Eliza?"

"Gone to her work, and Ben has gone to see the skating, so I am here all alone, with nothing to do but to sit still and look at you. How well you are looking, to be sure! And how's missis, and Mr. Lisle, and the doctor.

Marion's answers appeared highly satisfactory to the old lady, and an animated conversation ensued concerning all the sayings and doings in Ennington for the last six months.

"And so Eliza is a Catholic?" said Marion.

The old woman nodded her head, and peeped into a saucepan simmering on the fire.

"Yes, deary, she be," she replied at last, slowly resuming her seat. "Yes, she be, and though I felt dreadful about it at first, for it seemed like losing her twice, yet somehow or other, I have got used to it, and I should be almost sorry to see her turn back again now."

"O, nursey, how wrong of you! why?"

"Because, do you see, Miss Marion, whatever her religion is, it comforts her, and to a poor

thing like her, that has been knocked about from pillar to post, till her heart was almost broke, of course that is the chief thing. 'Liza,' says I, at first, 'why can't you worship God as you have been always taught; what do you want more nor your Bible, and your Saviour, to take you to heaven?' Well, Miss Marion, I know I spoke cross, for my temper was up, and I was riled at the idea of her being a papisher. But she answered me so quiet-like, that I felt quite ashamed. She was a long time trying to explain her religion to me; but that, you see, wasn't no manner of use. I will let her be what she likes, and let her make her boys what she likes, and I'll be very civil to the priest when he calls, for really, Miss Marion, he do be one of the nicest gentlemen I ever saw; but I won't change my religion for anybody! I have lived by my Bible, and gone through all my troubles with it, and with God's help, I'll die by it. I know I'm a sinner, but I trust to God's mercy through Christ, and that's all I know, and all I care to know."

"It must make you very dull, to see Eliza praying to the Virgin Mary, and all that sort of thing?"

"Well, it used to do, deary; but I've got over it. I am sure she's got real religion in her heart, so I don't seem so much to care, though I do think there's a good bit of nonsense mixed up with it, I must say. I did feel queer when I first see little Benny fumbling them beads. O, deary me, Miss Marion, what use can they be?"

"Well I think the rosary one of the few beauti-

ful things in their religion. I was much struck with it, I know, the last time I was here; I forget what they are now, but I remember at the time I thought the meditations beautiful."

"Did you, though? Well, of course you know best; it's all Greek to me together. To please Liza I went to church with her once, but I couldn't get on no how. But it doesn't much matter, deary; when we get to heaven we shan't quarrel as to which road we came by, though people do make a mortal deal of fuss about it here below."

"You go to the Methodist chapel, I hear, now?"

"Yes, I do; for as for that Mr. Gardiner, God forgive me! but I can't abear him. Only to think of him alongside of dear Mr. Lisle, or the doctor!"

"Well, nursey, you know he came to see me once or twice when I was ill, and though I tried hard to like him, I thought him a most disagreeable man, especially for a clergyman."

"They say he only became a minister for this living, which they didn't want to go out of the family. It was in his father's gift, I think they call it; they say, too, it was his wife's money as made him marry her. But he has paid dearly for it, for, if what people says is true, he daresn't call his soul his own, poor man. Mr. Gardiner met me the other day," continued Turner, "and at first he was going to pass me by, though I made my best courtesy; but all on a sudden he recollected who I was, and didn't he just give it to me! First about Liza, and then about going with the Methodists. He told me *I* ought to be ashamed of myself."

"And what did you say?"

"I spoke to him civil like, at first, and said as how Liza must do as she liked, and said I found the Methodist ways better for me somehow; but when he still spoke so rude to me, I fired up, and told him a piece of my mind. It isn't because a body is poor they are to be treated like that, you know, deary."

"Of course not," said Marion.

"If you had only seen Mr. Joe, when I told him what I had said to Mr. Gardiner. He laughed till it seemed as though his sides would crack. O, he do be a right merry young gentleman, do Mr. Joe! But here comes the young ladies, deary," and as she spoke, two bright faces, fresh as rosebuds in the frosty air, peeped in at the lodge door

"Father Stirling told us to remember him to you most kindly," said Emily, as Marion walked up the drive between the twins, "but he says he is afraid he shall not have the pleasure of seeing you before to-morrow at dinner; he is so busy just now with the poor.'

"Poor Father Stirling!" said Marion gently, as, conjured up by his name, a flood of recollections passed through her mind. Childish recollections, though mingled with them was the shadow of a sad tale recently told. Strange fatality! had Henry Lisle striven to enlist her sympathy on behalf of the priest, he could not have done so more effectually, than by the history of their bygone and shattered friendship.

CHAPTER XII.

IF the home of the Darrells, when gay with summer flowers, and surrounded by lawns and leafy trees, was beautiful, it was hardly less so in its pure white mantle of snow. Then the giant oaks, whose verdant honors had fallen and budded so many times, stood erect in their brumal stiffness; the magnificent cedars, that gave the estate its name, bowed even lower beneath their crystal load; the little brooks around suspended their gushing melody, and their banks and all things else around were covered with a network of nature's pearls. It was a charming winter picture, when the sunshine, cold and bright, fell on the unsullied surface of the snow; but even more beautiful, when the full moon cast her light and shadow on the scene.

"Emily, it is fairy land!" said Marion, who on crossing the hall, about ten o'clock on Christmas eve, had found Joe and his sister looking out upon the night from the garden floor. "It is fairy land!" she repeated; "I never saw anything so lovely!"

"How would you like a walk?" asked Joe.

"Above all things; are you and Emily going for one?"

"We were talking of it," said the latter, looking at her brother.

"O, I see!" said the sensitive little Golden-hair, shrinking back. "I should be *de trop*."

"No, darling; you would not indeed, but—"

"Out with it, Em!" cried her brother. "Come, Marion, I will tell you all about it. We always go to the midnight Mass on Christmas eve, and we were just discussing what was to be done with a certain little Protestant, who it is to be feared would not go with us, and yet whom we could not make up our minds to leave at home alone."

"But, Joe, I can stay with your mamma and Mr. Darrell."

"Unfortunately the Pater and Mater go too."

"Then I can amuse myself with a book, and if I get sleepy, go to bed."

"What an entertaining Christmas eve!"

"Nay, Christmas eve will have passed by midnight," returned Marion; "any way," she continued, laughing, "I shall be better off than you, for I can have my supper, while you have, all of you, to fast."

"No, not the girls, only your obedient servant, who is above twenty-one."

"You will be very hungry by the time you get home."

"I think not; I had a good dinner at six, and that will do till to-morrow morning."

"But, Joe, listen; it will be Christmas day when you get home, so you can have what you like."

"Can I? Thank you," replied Joe, looking aside at his sister.

"May he not have some supper even then?" replied Marion.

"Yes, if he likes," said Emily.

"Joe!" called his mother, from the drawing-room door.

"Joe seems very strict," said Marion; "I should think he is a very good Catholic."

"Very conscientious," replied Emily; "but we always laugh at him, because though he acts up to the iota in everything, he never goes beyond it. He is as religious as most boys of his age, but you must not look upon him as a model of piety. He would not eat a crumb over the collation allowed on fast days for the world; but at the same time he would decidedly grumble at anything short of it. He would not miss Mass on Sundays for an empire, but I hardly ever in my life knew him in the church ten minutes before time, or a quarter of an hour after the service was over. He would not eat meat on Fridays, I verily believe, to save him from starvation; but he likes a very good fish dinner. There, now you have Joe—he would, I am persuaded, die any death for his religion; but he takes things very easily."

"Then why will he not have any supper to-night after twelve o'clock? for I could see by his face that he meant not to do so."

"That," said Emily, quietly, "is because he is to receive Holy Communion to-morrow. For that," she continued, "he will be in the church by half-past six to-morrow morning, to make his preparation before the Mass, which will be at seven. So

you see, merry as he is, and self-indulgent in common with all other boys, he can do something for Almighty God. I did not include these duties just now, when I was laughing at him. God bless him!"

"Yea, and he shall be blessed, though I don't know who you are talking about," cried Joe's voice behind them. "I hope it was not the Rev. Dolphus, though."

"Who is he?"

"He means Mr. Gardiner. Do not be so uncharitable, Joe! I am sure I would bless him willingly if I could, especially at Christmas time, and so would you."

"Would I!" said Joe. "Now, Marion, what are you going to do with yourself, without the light of our countenances?"

"Anything; pray, do not trouble yourself about me. I shall manage very well."

"I can propose a capital plan."

"What? Something very outrageous, I know," said Marion.

"Come with us. We shall have a jolly walk over the snow, first-rate music, best carpet and vestments, and I don't know what all. Last, not least, no sermon, so you will run no risk of being converted."

Amid all his fun, a prayer was nevertheless flickering up from the sailor's heart, that she might.

"Do!" cried Emily, clapping her hands as in the days of old.

"What would *he* say?" thought Marion; but

she glanced at the moonlight and thought of the music, and the inducement was too strong.

"Very well, I will."

"Hurrah!" cried Joe; "and now come in and sing that duet with Edith, which we all like so much."

And so Marion found herself once again in the Catholic church of Harleyford. They arrived there some little time before the Mass commenced, and seated in the same seat, beside the same friends, before the well-remembered altar, with its gilded tabernacle and massive candlesticks, Marion strove to recall and analyze the feelings with which she had regarded these things five years before. The church had been enlarged and adorned since her last visit, and the Christmas decorations were far more beautiful than she had anticipated. But Marion was changed. She felt that lights, incense, flowers, and music, however sweet, would have little or no influence over her imagination now. "And of what else does this religion consist," she asked herself, "but in exterior show?" and she glanced from gilding to alabaster, and from picture to image. "Beautiful, very; but religion is something more than a spirit of beauty."

The Mass commenced, but although she revelled in the music, Marion continued to criticise. Not a vestment, not a genuflection, not a movement of the priest, passed unnoted or unjudged in that busy little brain. "Further off than ever!" she thought, as the Creed concluded. But when the "*Adeste Fideles*" arose high through the vaulted

roof, ringing out clearly from childish voices, our little heroine was moved, and a tear stole down her cheek. "*Venite adoremus!*" sang the choir, and Marion bowed her head over Emily's little book. Protestant as she was in every idea, and thought, and feeling, she felt the presence of the Child-God, and could not hold her head erect in pride, while every heart around her bowed before the cradle-shrine of Bethlehem.

"Are you pleased you came, Marion?" asked Joe, offering her his arm, as she found herself again with her friends in the frosty air and winter moonlight.

"Yes, very; I should have been dull at home by myself."

"How did you like it?"

"The music was beautiful."

"Yes; we had some professionals, besides our usual amateurs."

"I am not at all converted," said Marion, mischievously.

"Very likely not; did you expect you would be?"

"No. It is a strange thing, Joe, but the last time I was here, I liked your religion a great deal better than I do now. I had then, I remember, almost an idea of being a Catholic, or at least a Puseyite. Now—you must not be offended—but I hardly see an atom of sense in it all. I should like to know the use of that perpetual kneeling down and getting up again, which Father Stirling went through towards the latter part of the service."

"You would have knelt, had you been in his place," said Joe, quietly; "but Marion, I am not at all surprised at what you tell me about your old and new ideas."

"Why not?"

"Because I believe you too sensible now, to be captivated by the forms and ceremonies of any religion; and, excuse me, really that is all you know of ours yet."

"Nonsense, Joe! I know a great deal more of your religion than you think."

Joe smiled. "And yet you asked me why Father Stirling knelt."

"Yes, that is nothing; I mean that I understand the fundamental doctrines of your Church, such as your worship of the Virgin and the Saints, Purgatory, &c."

"I see," said Joe, still smiling; "but, Marion, we have greater doctrines even than those; shall I give you the words of one of your own divines, touching this very subject of genuflection? 'If,' he says, 'I believed what Catholics believe, I should lie prostrate on the sanctuary floor, day and night.' Come, that would be more extraordinary even than a genuflection!"

"Then what do you believe?"

Joe paused. "I wish," he said at length, "you would oblige me by asking my mother that question, instead of me."

"Joe!" cried Marion, bursting into a fit of laughter, "I believe you do not know, yourself."

"Not know!" he exclaimed; and the young man

turned on her a look so intense that Marion was awed. "Not know! But it is not from the mouth of a wild young fellow like me that you must learn such a truth as this. Ask my mother, or Emily."

Marion changed the subject.

"Father Stirling looks very little older," she observed.

"Very little; he wears very well."

"I am pleased to see him again. I used to be very fond of him as a child."

"So is everybody in Harleyford, I think, except the Rev. Dolphus."

"What, Mr. Gardiner?"

"Yes; he has done a great deal to annoy Father Stirling, but as yet, all his weapons have been turned on himself."

"I am not surprised you do not like him," said Marion; "he is one of those clergymen, who, entering the Church as a profession, get through their ministrations without either heart or earnestness, with neither the zeal of the High-churchman, nor the piety of the Low."

"Are these the distinguishing characteristics of the two parties?" asked Joe.

"I think so; little sympathy as I have with the Tractarians, I do consider them a very zealous body of men."

"Well now, Marion, you may think it strange, but though I am a Catholic, I infinitely prefer your even ultra Low-churchman. The Tractarian clings mainly to the forms which much as we think of

them, are valueless, detached from the mighty truths they symbolize. I remember once almost laughing, when I was beguiled by a friend and my own curiosity, into a Puesyite place of worship. Shall I tell you what it reminded me of?"

"Yes, do; but please to remember I have no fancy for Puseyism now."

"I know that; but now for my story. Once upon a time, during the Chinese war, it came into the sapient heads of some of the long-tailed Chinamen, that, as we gained such signal advantages over them by our steamships, if they only had them also, they could do great things. But the difficulty was to make them. Now you know the Chinese are first-rate copyists; so at last from a distance, (for you may be sure we did not let them get very near,) they made an exact imitation of one of our finest screws. There was the funnel, and all the *et ceteras*, and they gazed with no little pride on this *chef d'œuvre*, which was going to make the English tremble, and set free the Celestial Empire. Unfortunately, however, one thing was wanting to make the steamer complete."

"What was that?"

"The machinery, of which John Chinaman knew nothing; and when, having lighted some fagots under the funnel, they saw the smoke come out of the top in tremendous wreaths, they were wonderfully astonished to see their steamer stand stock still! Need I draw the parallel? The Tractarian may make crosses, and burn candles, chant his service, and set up his credence table, but it is only

a poor imitation of some things he does not understand, after all."

"You are very wise about the Church of England."

"Well, I have not passed through my life of twenty-two years with my eyes shut, and I have talked a great deal to Father Stirling about those things, and that makes me wiser than I should otherwise be."

By this time they had emerged into the broad road, and falling back with the rest of the party the conversation became general. But a quiet spirit seemed to have fallen over the whole family, and Marion supped alone before the cosy fire in her own bedroom.

"The compliments of the season, a merry Christmas, and a happy new year," said a hearty voice behind her, as she next day sat alone in the drawing-room, pouring over an illuminated folio by the firelight. Marion turning, beheld Father Stirling, and it was with a feeling of sincere pleasure that she returned the kind greeting.

"Well, I suppose it is rather late to condole with each other now," said Father Stirling, gayly, after a few minutes' chat, during which they were joined by the girls; "we are neither of us now, I suppose, whatever we were then, much the worse for our tumble; you were dreadfully hurt though, I believe, poor child."

"O, nothing to you, Father Stirling! I was well in a few weeks, and you were ill for a year afterwards."

"Yes, I was; but you see time heals all things. I am afraid, though," he added, thoughtfully, "he is not so good a mediciner for the mind as the body. What say you?"

"I hardly know—I have had so few wounds of either kind for him to cure as yet."

"Happy child!"

At this moment the bell rang, and in a few minutes the whole party, including the entire Seymour family, were gathered around the dinner-table.

Christmas! Christmas! Where is the heart that does not revel in thy name—that does not thrill with a thousand recollections, while the circle still unbroken gathers around the festive board, and every thought, and word, and glance is unity and harmony? When even the low, sad whispers from old times, that breathe around the elder ones, are hushed in the joyous melody of the home-birds, and half-faded memories of Christmas past, are illumined by the ruddy light of Christmas present. All is joy, for old hearts will not think, and young ones cannot forecast, cannot read those characters of change with which the recesses of the future must be stored. O, Christmas! dark would be the day if thou couldst fall as a shadow, rather than a sunbeam! But this can never be. There is indeed a danger, that amid the glare of the glowing fireside, the star of Bethlehem may shine above unseen; that amid the sound of revelry and feasting, the angels' harps may swell unheard. But when the best beloved have passed away, and the snapt heart-chain drags listlessly in

the dust, the spirit, freed from the world, feels its true vocation. *Gloria in excelsis Deo*—the lonely hearth and vacant chair are forgotten beside the Crib, *Pax hominibus bonæ voluntatis*—while Jesus, Mary, Joseph, smile from heaven, who shall mourn and weep on earth?

But the Cedars, at least, are as yet unshadowed, and worthy of Emily's "good old times' is the mirth that circles among the younger members of the party at Mr. Darrell's stories. Nor is Father Stirling far behind, and his tales of adventures in foreign lands, and college freaks, alternately melt his auditors into tears, or send them off into peals of laughter.

"Do tell us some more stories, please, Father Stirling," cried Emily. "We like them so much."

"Why, you children are like the daughters of the horse-leech! If I go on much longer, I shall be making one up, and then you would never trust me again."

"Tell us another tale about the French."

"The French! I am sure I have talked Paris to you, till you must know it almost as well as I do myself. You will be like Mr. Bridges, who went everywhere but to Complet."

"But where?"

"Complet. Did I never tell you about that?"

"Never. Do tell us, please."

"Well, once upon a time, there was a gentleman named Bridges, who, having determined on treating himself to a fortnight's holiday, thought he could not possibly spend it better than in a trip

across the channel. So on a balmy day in June he packed his portmanteau, and off he started. His purse was better stocked with money than his brains with French; but with the verbs *manger*, *boire*, and *dormir*, a pocket dictionary, and sundry pantomimic gestures, he stumbled through the first few days, and did his best to think himself profoundly happy. He had come, as he phrased it, 'to do Paris,' and he did it, and no mistake about it. He wandered about, a solitary figure, at the Louvre, the Luxembourg, the Tuileries, the Jardin des Plantes, the Gobelins, the—but it would take me so long to tell you where he did go, that it would be no use attempting it—the fact is, he went everywhere but to Complet."

"Why didn't he go there?" asked Joe.

"Because they wouldn't let him. He started from Palais Royal in all conceivable directions. He went to Passy, to Batignolles, to Vaugirad, but as soon as an omnibus came in sight, bearing the name of *Complet* above the door, he never could catch it. And yet it was evident to Bridges that it was a place of some note, or why so many omnibuses travelling thitherward, for there was not a quarter that he traversed, but an omnibus rumbled past, bound to that most mysterious locality.

"At last Bridges grew desperate, he had only two days more, and Complet he must visit, or how could he face those quizzical friends of his, who knew Paris so well, if he had never been to Complet? Yes, he would go, why shouldn't he? Just as he came to this desperate decision, an omnibus

crossed the square of the Palais Royal, bearing in unmistakable characters the name Complet.

"'Now for it,' thought Bridges, setting his teeth with determination; but the vehicle, as was usual, passed on before he had time to reach it.

"'Never mind,' said the chivalrous Bridges, thinking of Jones, Brown and Robinson, 'I'll go this time. Complet!' he shouted at the top of his voice, running after the omnibus.

"'Complet, Monsieur,' said the conductor, as he pointed to the board over his head.

"'Oui! Oui! Complet!' cried Bridges, still running on.

"'Complet!' roared the conductor.

"'Complet!' shrieked Bridges, waving his umbrella.

"By this time all the people in and on the omnibus were on the broad grin, which at any other time would have made Bridges, who was rather bashful, feel nervous, but too much was at stake now. His anger did not decrease when the conductor, having laid down his bar, sat himself upon it, shrugging his shoulders at poor Bridges.

"'Complet!' now shrieked a voice or two from the pavement, and thinking that the French accent might propitiate the conductor, where the English had so miserably failed, Bridges sped on in vain! The omnibus quickened its pace, and at that very minute Bridges tripping over a stone, measured his length in the Rue de Rivoli.

"'*C'est un vrai Anglais*,' said a Parisian belle, which remark happening to fall within the limits of

poor Bridges' French, in no way consoled him. But how to retaliate, when the speaker was a lady, and had only spoken the truth, for Bridges was a Cockney born and bred; but with all his devotion to the fair sex, he could have eaten her without salt. But even if he had, he would not have been much better for it, so he wiped off the dust, picked up his umbrella and limped off to his hotel. Two days after he left Paris, sad at heart, for he loved the cafes, the restaurants, the Boulevards, and Champs Elysees, but he had not been to Complet. On board the steamer he met with another homebound Englishman, and having grown communicative, they retailed their respective adventures.

"'There is one quarter of Paris,' said Bridges, 'that must be very populous, for I never saw an omnibus going to or coming from it, that was not crowded.'

"'Which is that?" asked his new friend.

"'Complet,' said Bridges. 'Those dunder-headed Frenchmen could never understand me, though I screamed Complet at them till I was hoarse,' and Bridges narrated his adventure of the previous day in the Rue de Rivoli.

"'O dear! O dear!' said his companion, shaking with laughter.

"'Did you ever hear such a thing?' asked Bridges.

"'No, that I never did; why, man alive, Complet means *full!*'"

"Now, Father Stirling, you made that story up, you know you did!"

"And is that all the thanks I am to get for my trouble in telling it?"

"Emily is very ungrateful," said Marion; "I am sure we will believe it, every word."

"Will you? Well, perhaps you had better not, altogether, for though Brown, Jones, and Robinson contrived to worm it out of poor Bridges on his return home, perhaps they may rather have embellished it."

The ladies now adjourned to the drawing-room, where they found a cosy, chatting little party, and when shortly afterwards they were joined by the gentlemen, Marion found herself beside her old friend, the priest.

"I had quite forgotten," she exclaimed after a few minutes' conversation, "but do you know, Father Stirling, I meant to have been very stiff, for I am very angry with you!"

"With me! What have I done?"

"Why, converted my old nurse's daughter."

"No. I have not."

"Who did then?"

"Almighty God. It is paying me a vain compliment to give me credit of anything half so glorious. Have you seen her?"

"Not yet, but I saw her mother yesterday."

"Well, and you found her more than half reconciled to it, did you not?"

"Yes; but you will never make a convert of her."

"Very likely not; poor old soul, I believe her to be a thoroughly honest, straightforward woman."

"Her creed is a simple one," observed Marion.

"Very," replied the clergyman; "faith, hope and charity."

"And do you believe that is enough to save her?" asked Marion.

"I do; for I believe she is in invincible ignorance."

CHAPTER XIII.

IT was New Year's night, and there was an evening party at the Cedars. Nothing so delighted the kind-hearted master of this hospitable home, as to see the young people merry around him, and to-night it certainly appeared that in furtherance of this object, the usually quiet house had (to use Joe's own phrase) been turned out of window. The whole was a scene of lights, flowers, and flitting drapery. The conservatory was hung with Chinese lamps, the large dining-room converted into a ball-room, while quiet coteries of elderly people clustered around the card-table, or sat talking politics and news in the drawing-room. Radiant amid them all passed Mr. Darrell, a perfect spirit of sunshine now animating the dancers, now lingering behind a whist-player's chair, now turning over the pages at the piano, explaining prints and pictures, or chatting with some aged dowager in her corner by the fire. Can he be forgiven, if amid all he gazed with unwonted pride on his lovely Emily, certainly pronounced by all the belle of the country, far and wide? Many a manly form hovered around her, and many a whispered compliment fell on her ear, many an eye

beamed in the light of hers; but though she smiled, and chatted, and danced with all, not one could claim the preference, and Mr. Darrell sighed.

"Unusual in a pretty girl of seventeen," he whispered to his wife. "That quiet Edie is twice as much of a coquette as she. See how pleased she is with the soft nothings of that moustached hero. Little puss! They have put the quadrille out twice already by their inattention. There is little Emily, on the other hand, treats all attentions with the greatest possible nonchalance. She is a darling child, but I wish she was more like other girls. Look at her now, half hidden behind the curtain, talking to old Seymour."

"Marion Howard is a sweet looking girl, with her beautiful floating ringlets," observed Mrs. Darrell.

"Very; but she is not as pretty as our Emily."

And now a polka struck up, on which the Darrells and Seymours, the only Catholic girls present, slipped off into the drawing-room, where they stood laughing and chatting with the old people, rather, perhaps, to the discomfiture of sundry scientific whist players, who growled behind their cards.

"Emily," said Joe, putting his head in at the door, "come and have just a turn or two with me. You are such a jolly little dancer. There's not one of the girls there fit for anything after you. Come!"

"Are you tired?" asked Joe, as, after turns

around the room, Emily stopped and put her arm in his.

"Rather—come and have a walk with me up-stairs in the long gallery. It looked so pretty in the moonlight, as I came through just now, and every place down here is so warm."

They passed up the broad oak staircase, and still arm-in-arm, were soon gazing through the large window at the end of the gallery, upon the placid snow scene.

"It is very nice here," said Emily, laying her head upon her brother's shoulder, while he stole his arm gently around her. "Do you not think so?"

"Very; the music below sounds so subdued and sweet."

There was a silence of some minutes, broken at length by the sister.

"Joe!"

"Yes, darling."

"What are you thinking of?"

"Of many things—of the sea, partly, and how long it will be before I am a captain, and partly of the people down stairs."

"Joe," said his sister, looking up at him archly, "I have made a discovery to-night."

"What is it?"

"That you are a desperate flirt."

"O, Em! What an accusation! They say that, I know, of sailors generally, but I thought I was an exception to this rule."

"Then, 'lay not that flattering unction to your

soul' any longer. You have been doing dreadful execution among the young ladies to-night, I fear!"

"It was not premeditated homicide, then, but one must be civil in one's own house."

"How do you like the Seymours?"

"Very well; they have wonderfully improved."

"What do you think of Jessie?"

"She is a good-looking girl, but I think she knows it."

"She cannot look in the glass without doing so. She is certainly the belle to-night."

"Jessie Seymour! Is she?" asked Joe, dryly.

"Why, I thought you liked her very much."

"I do pretty well, but she is not one of my prime favorites."

"Joe, I am going to tell you something. I hardly know whether I am right or wrong in doing so, but remember, it is only what I think, not what I know—"

"Well, what is it?" asked Joe, with all a man's curiosity.

"I think Jessie is fond of you."

"The dickens she is! Nonsense, Em!" he added, very seriously, "you don't mean it!"

"I mean, that from many little things, I think she is, and up to this moment I half fancied you rather liked her."

"O, my dear little sissy! for goodness sake don't tell her I don't! At least, that is, give her a hint about it in some fashion. Girls have such nice ways about them, they can say a world of things in one

word. O, Em! I wouldn't have anybody like me that I couldn't like again for twenty worlds. Why, what on earth have I ever said to her?" And poor Joe's face looked the picture of consternation.

"Nothing that I know of," said Emily, who could not help laughing in spite of his distress; "but you really have shown her a good deal of attention at different times. Look even at to-night, you have been flirting dreadfully with her."

"Nonsense, Emily, I was the same to all the girls in the room!"

'No, Joe, you were not; there is one that you have very much neglected. One reason why I brought you up here, was to scold you for it again. I do not think you have once asked Marion to dance with you all the evening."

The grasp around Emily's waist tightened.

"Yes, I did once, but she was engaged."

"And why did you not ask her again?"

"I don't know."

Emily glanced up; the young man's cheeks were crimson.

"Joe," she whispered softly, kneeling upon the broad window-sill, and throwing her arms around his neck, "tell me what is the matter?"

"Nothing, child!"

"Yes, there is! O, Joe, darling! I have read your secret—but a Protestant!"

"I know that, but it does not prevent her being an angel."

"And would you peril your faith, your soul for her?"

"No, Emily, she is as dead to me as though we had never met."

"Thank God!" cried the impetuous little creature, bursting into a passionate flood of tears.

"Come, Emmy, Emmy! you will make such a fright of yourself, and that will never do."

"I cannot help crying, for I know, that in spite of all your gayety, you must be unhappy."

"No, I am not; I have one hope left."

"What is that?" asked his sister, anxiously.

"That she may yet become a Catholic. I have prayed for this ever since I first knew her."

"So have I, but I will pray harder than ever, now that you and she are bound, as it were, in our intentions. Of all things I could desire, it would be to see Marion a Catholic, and you her husband; and I should like to see Edie well married, too," she added, musingly.

"And for Emily to be the old maid of the family, eh?"

"Just so, with a dog, and a cat, and a parrot."

"No, no, Emmy, that would never do; we must have a baronet, at least, for you."

"A baronet! Nothing short of a marquis will satisfy me, I can tell you."

"I wonder what will be the fate of us three?" said Joe, thoughtfully. "If that young Gauntlet were only a Catholic, there is no one I should like better for you than he. He is really a good sort of a fellow."

Again they looked out upon the snow, and again there was silence.

"Joe," said Emily, at length, "I have guessed your secret, shall I tell you mine? A secret cherished in my heart of hearts for years, though never whispered except to one; but somehow, to-night, I feel that I must tell you, for, dear as Edith is, I cannot say things as easily to her as I can to you."

"Who is the one who knows it?" asked Joe, with a sickly sensation at his heart.

"Father Stirling."

"I thought so; then I can read it. O, Emily! Emily! would you break all our hearts? If you were ugly, stupid, or cross, it would be different; but you, our pet, our sunshine, the most beautiful girl of half the county."

Emily smiled. "Are you trying to make me vain? But this is not a right feeling," she continued; "if I were all your affection loves to fancy me, would it be too much to give to God?"

"No, but He does not ask it."

"He does."

"How do you know?"

"By what I feel here," she replied, laying her hand upon her heart. "From childhood He has never given me another thought."

"What does Father Stirling say?"

"He told me yesterday for the first time, that he believes I have a vocation; and that is why I have been so happy all day. Joe, darling, you should rejoice with those who do rejoice, and weep with those who weep."

"I shall have a great deal more weeping than

rejoicing to do then," replied her brother; "for though you are so jolly about it, I expect you will break our father's and mother's hearts."

"God will strengthen them," replied Emily.

"And when are you going?"

"Not yet; Father Stirling says I must wait at least two years. I shall be nearly twenty then."

"What order do you wish to enter? the convent where you went to school, I suppose. Bother those old nuns! I was always afraid of them. They could coax a very broomstick into taking their habit, I believe."

"They must first learn whether it had a vocation, which might be rather hard to determine. Now, you know, Joe, you do not believe one word you are saying; you only talk so because you are cross. You are wrong, I do not wish to go to the Sisters."

"Where then?"

Emily hesitated. "I would rather not talk to you about it this evening, you are not the dear boy you generally are."

"Well, I won't be cross any more, only tell me."

"I do not know yet, but I should like the Carmelites, or perhaps the Poor Clares."

"O, Emily! this is too much, I could not bear that!"

"Yes, you could," said his sister, kissing him, "or anything else, for the love of God. I am not going yet, so don't look so dull, but come down stairs again. Now I know your secret, and you know mine, we shall get on the better."

"I don't know that; it would be a comical fash-

ion of helping an overburthened horse, to put a fresh load upon him."

"Ah, but Joe! we must bear one another's burdens."

"That may be all very well, when one is empty-handed,.but when each has a good tidy load of his own, the other's help is little assistance. At any rate, I cannot say that I feel much the better of your communication. Fancy me at sea, thinking of you in a convent without shoes, and Marion married to somebody else. Comforting that, for a fellow, certainly!"

"I wish I had not told you now," said Emily, drawing the shawl around her.

"And so do I;" but seeing the shadow of his sweet little sister's face, Joe stopped. "Forgive me, my own darling!" he exclaimed; "be what you like, and may God bless you. You are shivering with the cold, come down directly."

Once more they mingled with their friends, and were soon again buoyant with the buoyancy of youth. At the end of half an hour Joe and Marion were whirling around in the polka.

"I engage you for the first quadrille at the country ball," said Joe.

"If I go," answered his companion; "but if I can possibly get myself excused, I shall. I have never been in a public ball in my life."

"Neither have the girls; but papa wishes to take them, and so they will not refuse."

"As much as to say, I must not do so either. Will Mrs. Darrell go?"

"No. It would be too much for her. It is seven miles off."

"Perhaps I may stay and keep her company."

"I do not think you will be let off very easily. Mind, I shall vote against you."

"Thank you. Though I do not know why you should throw your sword and belt into the scale! You will have enough to do looking after Miss Seymour."

"Her father is going," said Joe, "so I shall have no need to do that."

"Mr. Seymour has been here all this evening, but you have evidently seen great necessity for attending to her, notwithstanding."

"What a teaze you are, Marion! the girls have been giving you these notions, I know."

"My own eyes have," replied Marion.

"Then do not trust them for the future, for, believe me, they are false guides;" and the young sailor cast an earnest, reproachful glance upon his companion. He could not help it, and her woman's instinct read the interpretation.

That night, in the solemn solitude of its darkness, three hearts pondered a secret newly read.

"Poor dear boy! How anxious and unhappy he must be! I must pray hard for her conversion, for both their sakes;" and, with her rosary in her hand, Emily sank to sleep.

"Emily, my pet, my darling! I cannot bear it!" and the sailor heart sobbed in his great grief, and bathed the pillow with his tears.

"Does he really like me? I never thought of

it until to-night. I wish he had been at sea! He is such a fine good fellow, I would bear anything rather than make him unhappy; but, really, it is not my fault. Perhaps it is only fancy, after all, though." And Golden-hair fell asleep, and dreamed of Henry Lisle.

Marion did not go to the country ball, notwithstanding all Joe's persuasion and opposition, for, as she had a cold, Mr. Seymour and Mrs. Darrell took her part, and so the carriage drove off with Mr. Darrell and his children, leaving Marion and the mistress of the Cedars in quiet possession of its snuggest chimney corner.

"Now, Marion," said the latter, stirring the fire, and drawing the large screen closer, "we will make ourselves cosy; where is your knitting? I quite agree with you in preferring this to a seven miles' drive through the cold in a gauze dress, and I think a warm bed infinitely more comfortable than dancing till four or five o'clock in the morning. I shall be the only one at Mass to-morrow, I presume."

"No, that you shall not, for I will go with you."

"Will you? Then you and I will breakfast first by ourselves."

"You seldom miss Mass, do you?" asked Marion.

"Not very often, my dear, thank God."

"I cannot think why Catholics should think so much more of their churches than we do. Do you not believe, dear Mrs. Darrell, that God hears prayer offered to Him, before the duties of the day, in one's own room?"

"Certainly, dear, I do."

"Then do tell me, why you should go every morning through the cold, and sometimes even through the rain, to church, when you can pray just as well at home?"

"Marion, I shall answer your question by asking you another—do you ever hear from Edward?"

"Yes, very often."

"Why, then, do you long so anxiously to see him?"

"Dear Mrs. Darrell," replied the young girl, "what are these written words, in comparison to his own dear self?"

"Such is the feeling of the Catholic, my child," returned her friend; "his communion with his Father in heaven may be fervent anywhere, but his most ardent devotion is in the actual presence of his Lord."

"But God is no more present in the church than anywhere else—in this room, for instance."

"Did I not once tell you, Marion dear, that you knew very little of our religion? Suppose I told you that we believe that Jesus, God and Man, is really present on our altars, what would you say?"

"That it was not possible you could hold such a belief."

"Nevertheless we do, and strange as it seems to you, it is the one grand point of the Catholic religion. Like the heart in the human frame, it is the centre of its vitality; take it away, and every doctrine, every sacrament, has passed with it."

"I always thought your religion strange," ex-

claimed Marion, "very strange; but I never dreamed of such an idea as this in it. Do you mean to say that when you go into a Catholic church, you believe God is actually there?"

"Yes, as truly as He was in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, on the Mount of Olives, by the Lake of Tiberias, or on the cross, as He was in His resurrection and ascension, as He is at this moment in heaven. All this is expressed in the word Transubstantiation. Did you never hear of this doctrine of our Church?"

"Yes, sometimes; but I never stopped to consider what it meant. I thought it had something to do with your celebration of the Communion."

"And you were right," said Mrs. Darrell. "The Blessed Sacrament on our altars is what we receive in Holy Communion."

"What! God himself!" said Marion, starting. "You surely cannot believe such a thing as this."

"Not when Christ says, 'This is my Body, this is my Blood'?"

"Yes; but he meant it figuratively, of course," said Marion, decidedly.

"Who told you so?" asked Mrs. Darrell.

Marion paused, her eyes brimful of astonishment.

"Who told you so?" repeated her friend. "These are the words that Christ actually pronounced, and I believe them; you accept the same words, and you do not believe them. What is your authority for this?"

"But I do not disbelieve them, Mrs. Darrell."

"Not when God asserts one thing and you another? Protestants talk a great deal about the wresting of the Scriptures, but this is more. It is an absolute denial of the grandest institution of Christianity, and this revealed perfectly, purely, openly, in their own Bibles."

Marion looked thoughtfully in the fire, and for a time both ladies maintained a profound silence.

"If I believed such a thing, I am certain I should die."

"No, you would not," replied her companion. "Our Lord abides with us, not to destroy, but to save. On the contrary, I have heard many converts say that from the moment they believed in the Blessed Sacrament, the whole world was changed to them. But such a feeling as yours is very natural. I have no doubt that the sentiment of a soul upon whom this truth first dawns must be one of unmitigated awe. If you had been in a dark room for some time, and a person suddenly entered with a light, you would be dazzled, though after a time you would grow accustomed to it, and even use it as a means of sight. Yet this would not be because the lamp grew duller, but simply because you grew more habituated to its beams; and so it is with the Blessed Sacrament, for those who are first most overwhelmed with its glory, are those who afterwards bask most freely in the beams of its light and heat."

"But it all seems so confused to me," exclaimed Marion; "how do you believe that the Blessed Sacrament comes upon the altar?"

"I will explain this doctrine to you, my dear, as well as I can, but the subject is so tremendous that one almost trembles to approach it. You know that we all believe that Christ died upon the cross for man's salvation, for this at least is an article of faith common to both Catholic and Protestant; but we believe, moreover, that the one great Sacrifice, though perfectly consummated on the cross, is still continued in the Sacrifice of the Mass. The Blood of Christ is the universal medicine, the Mass the living fountain that keeps it perpetually flowing, bright with the ever fresh and unchangeable love of the heart of Jesus. Holy Communion is the stream of life, that, issuing from this living fountain, carries its whole efficacious power to heal, down into each of our weak and suffering souls, and the power of all the other sacraments likewise, takes its rise in this one same glorious spring, this living Presence of our Redeemer."

"What do you mean by the Sacrifice of the Mass, dear Mrs. Darrell? Surely you believe the Sacrifice of our Lord, once offered on Calvary, was sufficient to save the whole world?"

"Undoubtedly it was, Marion; but our faith teaches us that the Sacrifice of the Cross and the Sacrifice of the Mass are one and the same thing. Thus, you see, the death of our Divine Lord is not for us, as for you, an historical event that took place some eighteen hundred years ago, but an ever present reality; for He who had power to lay down His life, and to take it up again, chose to perpetuate the moment of His death until the

end of time. And as we believe that these two Sacrifices are identical, so we believe that Jesus Christ is offered, and sin atoned for, as perfectly in one as in the other. In the great Sacrifice of our Lord, therefore, the two ancient priesthoods are combined and fulfilled. That of Aaron, with its constant stream of blood, flowing ever as sin abounded and increased, and that more glorious and mysterious priesthood of Melchizedek, who offered bread and wine, and whose superiority, Abraham, the very foundation-stone of the Aaronic dispensation, acknowledged by giving him tithes of the spoils he had taken from the enemies of God. Like that priest of the Most High God, the priest of latter days takes bread and wine; all he does is to pronounce the words of consecration that Jesus Christ himself pronounced eighteen hundred years ago, 'This is My Body, this is My Blood,' and those words bring down the King of kings from heaven, to remain under those humble veils of bread and wine until He glides into the hearts of his children in Holy Communion."

"Is the Blessed Sacrament always on the altar?"

"Yes, dear, in the tabernacle; that is why that red light burns before it."

"And that is why you always kneel when you enter the church! Now I understand what Joe meant, when he said on Christmas eve, that I should have knelt, had I been in Father Stirling's place."

Once again there was silence, during which

Marion pushed back her chair, and knelt down upon the hearth-rug at Mrs. Darrell's feet, where she remained, apparently absorbed in the red coals.

"It is a strange thing," she exclaimed at length; "but this, something like this, has been my dream from my almost babyhood. Of course, my dear Mrs. Darrell," she added, suddenly looking up through her curls into that lady's face, "of course I cannot think it true; but I can well imagine that those who do, live in a different world. Why you believe that you almost talk to God, face to face!"

"Of course we do, dear, and carry all our troubles to Him, as we should have done in the days of his visible sojourn on earth!"

"And I always fancied I understood the Catholic religion so well, while it seems I had never so much as heard of its principal doctrine, or at least never heard of it to give it a moment's thought. But it cannot possibly be true!"

"Then it is a magnificent deception," said her friend.

"You know, Mrs. Darrell, we consider the Lord's Supper as a figure of his death upon the cross," observed Marion.

"Are you not sufficiently acquainted with Bible history, my child, to know that the figure invariably precedes the thing signified? Where can you find a more beautiful one of our Lord's death and atonement than the Passover? A lamb without blemish was slain, and its blood sprinkled over their houses saved them from destruction. Not a bone was broken, but it was divided among

all the family, and entirely consumed with bitter herbs. Here certainly was a figure of the one great Sacrifice, perfect in all its parts. Our Lord came on earth and fulfilled it, and what then? Protestants say, that having done so, and abolished this exquisite figure of the Paschal lamb, before he left the world, he instituted in its stead another figure. Even supposing it to represent our great Redemption as past, and to be taken in memory of it, what is it? Why the representation of His Body by a square of wheaten bread, and the representation of His Blood by a drop of wine sipped out of a chalice. Catholics are at least reasonable in believing that our Lord worked a stupendous wonder, and veiled His Divinity and Humanity under the humble appearances of bread and wine, while Protestants, in denying the mystery, assert what outrages reason."

"I understand what you mean. You adore a mystery, where we only see a figure."

"Exactly so; and you must remember that our Lord once said, in speaking to his chosen twelve, 'To others I speak in parables, but to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.' Now would it not have been much more like a parable than the explanation of a mystery, to speak of the simple representation of a thing as the actual thing itself? And this, moreover, on the very eve of his death, when even men couch their last will and testament in unmistakable terms, lest when they are no longer living to explain, their intention should be taken in a different sense

from what they had intended. But there was another occasion beside the institution of the Holy Eucharist, upon which our Lord alluded to it. Of course you remember the long discourse in the sixth chapter of St. John, in which He talks so much of the 'Bread of Life' to His disciples, and says, 'Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you have no life in you.'"

"Ah! but of course that is a figure of speech."

"No, dear child, it is not. Do you think that for the sake of explaining this figure, if it had been such, our Lord would have suffered the Jews to have left Him as they did, for from that day many went back from Him, and walked with Him no more? Did He value disciples so little as to let them depart, rather than say, My Body shall be represented by a piece of bread, and My Blood by a drop of wine? Would it have been like the loving Jesus to let them go, when a word would have detained them? No, Marion, if the doctrine of Transubstantiation be not true, it is our Blessed Lord Himself who has misled the millions of rejoicing souls, who for nearly two thousand years have lived and died by the strength of this Bread of Life. For remember, my child, your Church is but a parasite newly sprung from the stem of an ancient tree, and until the reign of Henry the Eighth no other belief was known. Yes, millions have feasted as the twelve did on the night of that Holy Thursday, and have journeyed on to eternity, terrible to the devils, and

independent of the evil world, because they have been in the family, and eaten the Lamb that was slain to deliver them. Then, again, my dear, what do you suppose St. Paul meant when he said, 'Whoso eateth and drinketh unworthily, not discerning the Lord's Body, eateth and drinketh judgment (or as your Bibles have it, damnation) to himself?' Marion, God does not deal judgment and damnation lightly around him, but really I can hardly see why Protestants are threatened with it here. How can they discern what does not exist? If the Body of Christ is not in the Bread, nor in that cup, why this heavy denunciation for not discerning it? To Catholics this verse is plain enough, for surely judgment and damnation are due to him, who would dare to receive that humble host or chalice, which veil the living presence of Almighty God, as common bread and wine."

"But, Mrs. Darrell, where is the man, let him be ever so holy, who would be worthy to touch God?"

"Nowhere, Marion. But men like our priests, who devote their lives to His service, are more worthy to touch Him than the men who crucified Him. Do you not think so?"

"That was different; Christ consented to the humiliation of His passion for our sakes."

"And He consents to be handled by sinners now for our sakes. Can you not see, that if He comes down upon our altars of His own free will, it is for the very purpose of being handled by our priests, and received by men less pure even

than themselves? I can understand a priest prostrate on the ground beneath the sense of his unworthiness, and yet saying Mass ten minutes afterwards with the greatest confidence. Do you imagine the Virgin Mother of God considered herself worthy for one moment to perform the duties of that sacred maternity? Certainly not; but we can fancy her still less shrinking from those duties on the score of unworthiness. Had we scaled the heights of heaven to find the Blessed Sacrament and bring it to our altars, then indeed one might talk of God outraged by man; but while He Himself, of His own free will, visits His creatures in their nothingness, we may not shrink from Him. And who would wish to do so? O, my child! you may love God. I believe sincerely that, in common with many Protestants, you do; but the warmest Protestant piety must be cold beside even ordinary Catholic devotion. You must not mistake me in saying this. God forbid, that I should arrogate to ourselves, individually, warmer hearts in the cause of religion than you! It is not that. It is that there is a reality, a warmth, a home-feeling, if we may so style it, in the Catholic Church, that one looks for in vain elsewhere."

"Of course, dear Mrs. Darrell, with such a belief as yours, religion must be one golden, glorious dream. But it cannot be true."

"It is true," said Mrs. Darrell, kissing her; "true as God, for it is God himself. To-night, of course, I have only given you a few points of this important subject; there are many more,

and to-morrow I will lend you some books, and you shall read them for yourself. That is, if you would like to do so."

"Of course I should like," said Marion, energetically; "let me take them to church and read them during the Mass. Somehow this idea seems the most beautiful one I heard of. Catholics ought to be good; I should think they would never dare to go inside a church if they had done wrong."

Mrs. Darrell smiled. "That would be rather hard, Marion; God does not bear with sinners the less patiently because He hates sin with an inexorable hatred. Hence the Sacrament of Penance."

"Penance! O, Mrs. Darrell! that is dreadful! I never hear the word without thinking of the pilgrims of Lorretto with peas in their shoes. I never can understand how any one can believe in getting to heaven by doing penance."

"Ah, Marion, that shows that you know just as much of the Sacrament of Penance as you did just now of the Holy Eucharist. But we will not talk of this to-night. You have quite enough to think of for the present."

"I have, indeed."

At this moment the supper was brought in, and soon after they retired. But it was late before Marion's light was extinguished, for she sat a whole half hour in reverie before she commenced her preparations for the night, and then the sixth chapter of St. John was read and re-read many times; and during all this time Golden-hair never thought once of Henry Lisle.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I AM very sorry, my dear," said Mrs. Darrell, the next morning to her little guest. "I have mislaid the key of the closet, in which I had placed several books; but I will look for it, and give you the volumes I promised you, as soon as I find it. Do you think you had better go to Mass with me this morning, it is so very cold?"

"Surely, if you can bear it, it will do me no harm," said Marion.

"I do not know that; we Catholics get used to inclement weather and untimely hours; you hardly ever went out so early on such a cold morning in your life, I should think."

"If I were at home, I should very likely be just starting for the schools, to help the teacher cut out and fix the work for the children. I generally go twice a week; it is so much for her to do by herself, poor thing."

"Well done, little Marion! I had no idea you were so handy or so industrious!" exclaimed Mrs. Darrell.

"What time did they come home from the ball?" asked Marion.

"Between four and five this morning. Betsy sat

up for them, and had plenty of hot coffee ready. I do not expect we shall see any of them very soon."

At this moment the door opened, and Emily entered, beaming and bright as usual.

"Why did you get up so soon, my child?"

"Because I did not care to stay in bed; I never like to make the morning pay for the night's dissipation. Besides, I wanted to go to Mass."

"Why, Emily, you are quite a little miracle; it is more than I could do, and I am both older and stronger than you."

"I do not like missing Mass; things never seem to go right all the day afterwards, if I do."

Marion glanced at Mrs. Darrell, but she said nothing.

"Well, and did you and Edith make any conquests last night?" asked her mother.

"What do you suppose, mamma? Why, if these had been the days of chivalry, I expect you would have had half a dozen heralds at the door by this time, all making proposals for the hands of your daughters at once. But as they do things more quietly now-a-days, I suppose they will not come."

"No; but seriously, Emily, how did the ball go off, and how did you enjoy yourself?"

"The ball went off very well, just as I expected. There was a great deal of dancing in a very small space, a great deal of dress, and very little taste, and a great deal of laughing, flirting, and talking, but very little said, and—shall I go on, mamma?"

"Yes, do; what?"

"Do not say anything about it to papa, or he might think me ungrateful; but it seemed to me that a great deal of time and money had been expended for very little enjoyment."

"I am sorry you did not enjoy yourself."

"I did not say that, mamma, dear. I really got on very well, but you know I do not care for these things. I love a quiet dance at home, or a cosy little party around a winter's fire, or a friendly picnic, or anything of that kind; but I am a thorough home-bird, and should never care to put my nose outside the Cedars, except for church. I do love home!" and the sweet face brightened like a sunbeam.

"May you never tire of it, my darling."

"Tire of it! O, mamma! that would be to tire of all of you; for if you were not here, the Cedars would be as indifferent to me as any other place."

"And how did Edith get on?"

"Very well, indeed; she at least thoroughly enjoyed herself, and when she had danced a little time, and grew excited, she really looked very nice. Those red geraniums suited her dark hair and complexion so well. As for Joe, he spent the greater part of his time with Dora."

"With Dora! I thought Jessie was his favorite."

"It seems not, for he took very little notice of her; nor do I think his attentions to Dora would have been so exclusive, but he knew so few of the girls there."

"Poor fellow! These long voyages make him quite a stranger at home," said his mother.

Emily glanced anxiously at Marion. "Whatever her feelings with regard to Joe, she is not jealous of him," she thought. She was certainly not, for she did not even notice that he had been mentioned. She was at that moment deeply engrossed in recalling the conversation of the previous evening. The fact was, that Marion could think of nothing else, and it was not till Mrs. Darrell had addressed her twice, that she started from her reverie.

"It would be an insult to offer a penny for such thoughts as those," said Emily; "from the earnest expression of the face, I should say gold would not have bought them."

Marion laughed. "I hardly know what I was thinking of myself; but it led me to the conclusion that this is a very strange world."

"A conclusion more true than original," replied Emily. "It is a very strange world, and in some things a very silly world; and I am afraid," she added, almost in a whisper, "in many things a very dangerous one."

"It is getting on for nine," said Mrs. Darrell, looking at her watch; "it is almost time to start. As I cannot get those I want for you, here is a little book I should like you to look through. You read French, do you not? It is entitled, '*Elevations sur la Sainte Eucharistie;*' it is in no way a controversial work, but a book of devotion. The subject is the Blessed Sacrament. I

have often thought that if such volumes as these found their way more frequently into the hands of Protestants, they would do much more in teaching them what our religion really is, than any amount of controversy and discussion. Of course, the truth cannot be known unless it is explained; but I am sure, if Protestants were to read such works they would be astonished at the depth of fervor they display—but *depechons nous!*"

It was in vain that Marion tried to fix her thoughts upon her book, although it bore so completely on the subject engrossing her mind. She closed it soon after the commencement of Mass, and remained during the rest of her time with her eyes riveted on the altar, weighing and re-weighing Mrs. Darrell's words of the night before.

"I can well understand," she thought, "that converts to the Catholic religion must see everything in the world very differently to what they did before. God on the altar! Jesus among His people, as He was before His death!" and then she added for about the twentieth time that morning, "It cannot be true, and I will not think any more about it." But she did think for all that, again and again, and it was not till Mrs. Darrell touched her arm to tell her she was going, that she awoke from her dream. But amid all her *pros* and *cons*, Golden-hair forgot to pray, forgot to ask the Dweller on the altar to reveal His presence to her in His own way, and so she questioned and wondered on.

As they were leaving the church porch the little boy who had served Mass ran after them, and turning around, they saw the priest standing at the door of the Presbytery.

"I wanted to see you," he said, as he ushered them into his little parlor, where his breakfast was prepared, "to ask you to go and visit an old woman for me, who, finding herself really ill, is showing, they tell me, some signs of repentance, after staying away from the sacraments for thirty years. I was just going up to see her, when it struck me that a visit from you might do some good by way of preparation, more particularly as I fear the poor creature has been neglected during her illness. You have been instrumental in helping to save so many lost sheep, that I really should like you to see her. She lives in Spencer's Gardens. You will easily find her out, I think."

"O, I have a poor family there too," said Emily; "so I will go with mamma."

"But what will Marion do?" asked Mrs. Darrell. "We had better walk home with her first."

"Spencer's Gardens is a very short distance," said Father Stirling. "I should propose that Miss Howard stay here till you return. I dare say she will excuse me if I go on with my breakfast, for I assure you I begin to need it. Shall it be so?"

Marion answered with a smile. Father Stirling placed a chair for her by the fire, and the two ladies took their departure.

"Don't you convert her, Father Stirling," cried Emily, running back from the house door, where

her mother was condoling with the old housekeeper on her rheumatism.

"I am too busy," said the priest, pouring out his coffee.

"You have been very gay, I hear, up at the Cedars lately," said Father Stirling, after a short conversation, the topic of which had been the warm hearts that had just quitted them.

"Rather."

"We shall have you going back to Ennington quite a dissipated young lady. Did you enjoy yourself at the ball last night?"

"I did not go," returned Marion, "on account of my cold."

"I was thinking that you were out rather early, after such a night of hard work."

"Emily went, though, and they did not get home till half-past four this morning, but she would not miss Mass."

Father Stirling smiled. "Quite right."

"A little longer sleep must have been a great temptation to her, though. I should never have resisted it."

"Perhaps not; every one is not Emily Darrell. I suppose you were disappointed in not going to the ball?"

"No, indeed I was not; I do not like the idea of a public ball."

"I think, as a rule, they are best avoided; but you see, in this instance, Mr. Darrell's party, with the friends they expected to meet there, would form quite a coterie; so that it was almost the

same thing to Edith and Emily as a party at their own house."

"But I am glad I did not go," observed Marion. "I spent a nice, quiet evening with Mrs. Darrell instead, and I made a discovery."

"A discovery! Of what kind? Did you get among Mr. Darrell's telescopes?"

"No; we wandered among subjects higher even than the stars, and I learned something I never knew before."

"What was that?" asked Father Stirling, laying down his knife and fork.

"I learned for the first time what you believe in your doctrine of Transubstantiation, and why you believe it."

"And was that all?"

"All! that has given me something to think about for the next month."

"I could wish, dear child, that you had gone further still," said the priest, "and that beneath His sacrament you had found the Author of that Transubstantiation Himself."

"That could not be, Father Stirling," replied the young girl, "because He is not there. I have thought well over all that Mrs. Darrell said last night, but though I think the idea most beautiful, it is impossible."

"Remember, you speak of God," said the clergyman.

"I know that," replied Marion; "but the day of miracles is past, and God now adheres to the laws of nature in everything. For one substance to be

changed instantaneously into another, would be contrary to those laws; and though we know that God could set them aside (for He can do anything), still we know He never does."

"I understand," said Father Stirling, "you meant to say our belief was improbable, not impossible."

"Well, yes, I think I did," said Marion, after a few seconds' consideration; "the word impossible, cannot, of course, apply to God."

"Very well; and you consider this doctrine improbable, because you say it is opposed to the laws of nature. But remember, to be opposed to the laws of nature is one thing, to be above them is another. The doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, which we hold in common, is not opposed to the laws of nature, although it is certainly above them. Human ideas of even the world around us are so limited, that things which at first sight seemed utter impossibilities have frequently seemed every-day facts in the end. What, think you, would our sires have said, even a hundred years ago, to the idea of their children travelling by steam, talking by the flash of an electric spark, painting by the sunbeam, and passing with rapidity through the air, by the aid of an invisible fluid? And yet all things now enter into the every-day occurrences of life.

"Do not, however, for one moment think that I bring down this glorious doctrine of the Church to such a standard as this. I merely wish to show you that if things as purely natural as these would have been treated as hallucinations, because they would have been counted as impossible, people

may easily consider things supernatural, things that never can be brought within the scope of human reason, as contrary to nature too. It is very strange that men see things every day in the material world which they cannot explain, and yet in the higher sphere of the spiritual world, they reject everything that cannot be demonstrated with the nicety of a mathematical problem. A man who cannot read the thoughts of his own child, disbelieves and scoffs, because he cannot penetrate the secrets of the Most High. Physicians tell us that in the course of a few years every particle of the human body has been renewed, but the process has been so gradual, that not a scar or spot has been removed, and very often not a feature altered. But for all this, does a man lose his identity? Am not I, who according to this theory must have been renewed many times, the actual George Stirling of my youth? You may well smile, for this is a strange thing, and a thing hard to demonstrate, that a man should be at once the same, and yet a different being. A tiny infant comes into the world, in a few years a man six feet high stands in that infant's place. Whence then has come this vast increase of bulk? Has not food, solid and liquid, been changed into flesh and blood, bone and muscle? This, my child, is no less strange than true. Suppose a being from another sphere who knows nothing of our world, were told that the oak tree once lay in the acorn shell. Would he credit you? would he not say, 'impossible?' No, Miss Howard, man who lives in such a world

as ours, a world that sprung into existence from nothing at one word of its Creator, must beware how he talks of things that are simply above his comprehension, as contrary to Nature. But the spectacle of the world around us, may lead us to the appreciation of the far more wonderful things to be found in a higher sphere, though as earth is lower than heaven, so are God's operations in the natural, lower than his revelations in the supernatural. In the words of the poet, though in perhaps a different sense, man may look 'through nature up to nature's God,' for he may tread with a firm foot the path of scientific investigation, if he will but remember that he is on holy ground. Then every step, as it leads him onward, shall lead him also upward, and as he has found wonders in the Kingdom of Nature, so shall he be prepared for miracles in the Kingdom of Grace, and mysteries in the Kingdom of Glory.

"But then you tell me that the age of miracles has passed. Are you sure of this? If the Bible spoke of none after our Lord's Ascension, I could better understand your assertion, but the Acts of the Apostles contain several. Or had this miraculous power extended only to the chosen twelve, I could have understood you better; but the last chapter of the same book contains two miracles of St. Paul, and he never even knew our Lord during the time of His mortal life on our earth. When, therefore, did it cease? Never, my child. The same God who turned water into wine at the marriage feast of Cana, who changed the Egyp-

tian river into blood, who transformed the rod of Moses into a serpent, and that serpent again into a rod, and who will one day call many a bright, glorified body from death and corruption, works His miracles still. Sometimes by human agency, as in the actions of the Apostles and subsequent saints; sometimes by direct interference, as in the conversion of St. Paul; sometimes by a secret act of His Almighty will, as in the mysteries of the Altar."

He ceased, but Marion remained silent.

"Doubtless," he added, "in all that I have said, I have only repeated Mrs. Darrell's words, for I have simply given you some plain and palpable reasons for not rejecting this doctrine, which must occur to every one."

"No," replied Marion, "Mrs. Darrell spoke in a different way to me; she tried rather to make me understand what this doctrine is, and why Christ should institute such a sacrament, than to reconcile it, as you have been doing, with the dispensations of Providence generally. Father Stirling, I cannot tell you how I feel; sometimes the idea of such a truth as this would be, seems heaven itself, and I feel as if I would give up everything to believe it; but then the thought comes over me, that to do so I must be a Catholic altogether, and there are many things in your religion that seem so very strange, almost dreadful to me, that I could never, never believe them."

"Do not trouble yourself about them, my child; bend all your thoughts and prayers to this one

subject, to this doctrine which, in spite of all your conflicting doubts, you half believe already."

Marion shook her head. "It is impossible that it should be true, and yet that so many people should be ignorant of it."

"Do you know how stand the comparative numbers of the Catholic and Protestant world? In the last table I saw, the Catholics were computed at one hundred and ninety-five millions, and the Protestants at about seventy-seven millions; so, you see, that although we make a comparatively small show in England, Scotland, and one or two other European countries, you must consider how we stand in Europe generally, in South America, and in a very large portion of North America. Why even the Greek Schismatics almost equal the Protestants! But it is not by statistics that we can decide the truth or falsehood of a doctrine. Does not our Blessed Lord Himself say, 'This is my Body, this is my Blood,' and dare we contradict Him?"

"I have just thought of something," said Marion, after a pause. "Christ says, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches.' Does He not speak figuratively here?"

"Of course He does, in the same way as when He calls himself the door of the sheepfold. He chose to be born the Son of an eastern nation, and He loved to use eastern metaphor."

"Then why may He not have used metaphor in instituting the Eucharist?"

"In one sense He did; for bread, that is the sup-

port of human life, is a beautiful metaphor of Him who is the food and sustenance of souls. But then our Lord had prevented His words from being understood only in a metaphorical sense by having already approved and praised His apostles for accepting His promise, that He would give them His flesh to eat in a literal sense. 'Then said Jesus to His disciples, Will you also go away?' Besides, bread and wine in themselves do not convey to us the idea of something else, as a statue or picture does; and you must remember, moreover, that when our Lord pronounced the words of consecration, He had not said anything from which the apostles could gather that He was going to institute bread as a sign of something else; so that when we read that He took something (a piece of bread) in His hand, and emphatically declared, 'This is my Body,' the apostles could only understand Him as declaring *what* that was which He held in His hand; and when He says that it is His Body, shall I not believe Him, and accept with my whole heart and soul the affirmation of Infinite Wisdom? I remember an answer once given by an old man to a scoffer, which afforded him a great deal of amusement, but which made an indelible impression upon me, boy as I was at the time. He was a very old man, with silvery hair, and I can see him now sitting at his cottage table, poring over his Bible.

"'You don't mean to say that you believe all that, do you?' asked the person alluded to, (one of the would-be wits of the rising generation—young

men who disbelieve because it is fashionable to do so, but without knowing why,) 'you don't mean to say that you believe all that!'

"'Every word, master,' said old William.

"'You are surely not fool enough to believe that the whale swallowed Jonah alive, and then spit him out again upon dry land?'

"'Master, I should believe that Jonah swallowed the whale, if the Bible said so,' returned old William, 'because it is the word of God.'

"And old William's answer is quite in the spirit of the Church. Our blessed Lord holds a piece of bread in His hand, saying, 'This is my Body,' and I believe Him. Without pointing to any object while showing His disciples how they must depend on Him in all their spiritual life, He represents Himself as a vine or door. Had He pointed to any object, however small, however strange, however apparently insignificant, I should have believed Him, had He only said, 'Behold me!' But this He never did, nor was there ever any sect in existence that believed in the actual presence of our Lord under any form, except the Catholic one, in the sacrament of the altar."

A silence of many minutes ensued, as Father Stirling began to stir his cold coffee in an abstracted manner. When at length he raised his eyes to glance at his little visitor, he pitied her amid the shadow of perplexity that had fallen on her young face.

"I never thought," said she at length, "that the word of God could be so difficult to interpret."

"Then do not try to interpret it, dear child, by your own private judgment, or every moment you will advance still deeper into the mire of perplexity. Take, rather, the inspired interpretation of St. Paul, 'the chalice of Benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? and the Bread that we break, is it not the partaking of the Body of the Lord?' Or going higher still, bow in simple faith at the words of Jesus Christ, 'and the Bread that I will give thee is My Flesh, for the life of the world.'"

As the priest uttered these words in a tone intense in its devotion, Marion trembled. Once more there was a silence, broken, however, shortly afterwards by the sound of footsteps on the garden path.

"Mrs. Seymour and her daughters," said Father Stirling, glancing at the window.

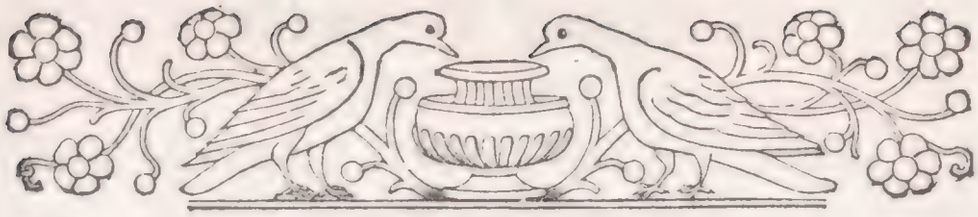
"I could not speak to them just now, really," cried Marion, rising from her chair; "are they coming here?"

"Yes, for a short time, but you need not see them; come with me;" and crossing the passage he opened a small door. "Go into the church, my child; you will find One there, who can tell you more in a heart-whisper, than I could do in the years of the longest lifetime."

Mrs. Seymour's visit lasted longer than Father Stirling had anticipated, and before it was concluded, Mrs. Darrell and Emily returned from their visit to Spencer's Gardens.

As soon as the former had taken their departure,

and the latter had given an account, spiritual and temporal, of the old woman, Father Stirling entered upon the subject of Marion Howard. "She is even now," said he, in conclusion, "upon her knees before the Blessed Sacrament. If, however, you will take my advice, you will not mention the subject of religion to her. Answer all her questions, pray for her very hard, offer your communion for her, and leave the issue to God."



CHAPTER XV.

ALTHOUGH from this time Marion's mind was in a great measure occupied by one subject, no casual observer would have said that anything more than usual interested her. She laughed, chatted, danced, rode, and even, under the patronage of Dora and Jessie, began to skate. She wrote regular accounts to her mamma of her gay life at Harleyford, visited the poor with Mrs. Darrell, helped with the Christmas trees at the schools, seeming in all things to live only in the excitement of the present moment. Only He who witnessed those long night prayers, in which the little weary soul struggled with its convictions at His feet, knew that amid all her merriment one thought was ever uppermost.

"I cannot bear it any longer," she exclaimed, one Saturday night, about a fortnight after her conversation with the priest; "I cannot bear it! I must see Father Stirling again, and tell him all I think and feel," and she gazed through her tears at "Keenan" and the little black Bible, both of which lay open before her. "This little book," she continued, taking up the former, "has been like a fairy wand, revealing hidden treasure. The Catho-

lic religion must be true; the chain of reasoning that proves it is so perfect. But somehow, though I understand, I cannot feel it; I seem half stupefied by the rush of thoughts that the subject brings with it, and hardly seem to pray at all. If I look into the future now, I can realize nothing, and I feel frightened. It is all very well to think about the Catholic Religion here, at the Cedars, in the bosom of a Catholic family, but what would it be to return to Ennington? What would mamma say? what would she do? What would every one in the village think and say—my class at the school—the people that I visit—Edward—Mr. Lisle?" But on these last two names, Marion dared not, and did not dwell. Notwithstanding the pliability of her disposition, she could be firm; and from the moment she commenced to study the subject, it was with a strong determination, come what might, to follow the truth. Her fire had burned very low before she rose from her knees; and when at last she lay down, it was not to sleep, for she tossed about restlessly till the morning.

That day Marion attended the service at the Protestant church. It is rather to be feared, however, that the pastoral address of the Rev. Mr. Gardiner received but small attention from our little heroine, whose thoughts would fly where she least wished; and then more than one letter was written in imagination to Edward, and more than one scene pictured with another, dearer still.

"How wicked this is!" was her self-accusation,

as she shook back her curls in vexation. "I shall very likely remain a Protestant, after all."

Marion stayed a short time after the dismissal of the congregation, to look at some mural tablets. As she was about to pass out of the church door she perceived Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner on the step before her. With a slight bow she would have passed on, but her former spiritual physician, who had recognized her, held out his hand.

"Miss Howard, I believe?"

Marion smiled.

"I am glad to see you looking somewhat brighter than when I saw you four or five years ago. And somewhat grown too, eh? How young people spring up, to be sure!—Miss Howard, my love."

The lady bowed very frigidly.

"Staying at the Cedars, I presume?" resumed Mr. Gardiner.

Marion replied in the affirmative.

"I wonder you are not afraid to trust yourself there!"

"Why should I be so?"

"For fear of getting converted, or, rather, perverted."

"I love Mrs. Darrell's family too well to fear them."

"Humph! Depend upon it, they will try. Trust a Romanist for leaving no stone unturned to make a proselyte!"

"Is that a discredit to them?" inquired Marion. "What good would it do them individually, if all the world were Catholic?"

"This good; that they imagine their own salvation insured, if they can only, by hook or by crook, make one convert."

"Excuse me, if I say I think you are mistaken in attributing such a belief to them," replied Marion, beginning to feel annoyed at Mr. Gardiner's manner. "But even if it were so, one could hardly blame them for zeal in saving their own souls, as well as another person's at the same time. Besides, however they may strive to further, or bring about conversions, we must remember that people can only become Catholics by their own free will and deed."

"Ah, young lady, you do not understand them quite as well as I do!" returned Mr. Gardiner. "They have a hundred ways of making black white, and wrong right. The less one has to do with them the better, I say. I warn you especially, mind, against that priest—Father Stirling, I believe they call him, a thorough Jesuit. He had better take care, or I shall be down on him some day."

Marion's cheeks told that she was in a state of quiet suffocation.

"If he would keep away from my congregation," continued the clergyman, "and confine himself to his own Irishmen, I should not care. What business has he to interfere with Protestants, I should like to know, 'creeping into houses, leading captive silly women!'"

"What is the matter now?" asked Mrs. Gardiner, sharply.

"That he has induced one or two more silly

fools to give up their religion, and go to his gingerbread chapel. Only look at Mr. Darrell's lodge-keeper. He never rested till he had induced her to go over."

Marion could restrain herself no longer. "Father Stirling never spoke to her in his life, Mr. Gardiner," she exclaimed, "until she called on him of her own accord, to speak to him about religion. May I ask if you know Father Stirling personally?"

"Not I. I never spoke to him in my life."

"It is a great pity, for I am sure you would like him, if you knew him as he is. A more perfect gentleman I never met, and he is as amiable as he is intelligent."

"Humph!" said Mr. Gardiner, "all the more dangerous. Did you ever hear of 'whited sepulchres?'"

"Often, but what have they to do with Father Stirling?"

A sarcastic smile was the clergyman's only reply.

"Do you intend honoring our school treat next Wednesday?" he asked, suddenly changing the subject.

"Next Wednesday? I am sorry to say I am already engaged for the Catholic one. Mrs. Darrell has given a Christmas tree, and I have promised to help distribute the presents."

"If I give you a little piece of advice, Miss Howard, will you be offended?"

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Gardiner, I think I

very likely shall. You might say what you pleased of myself, and I would take it in good part; but when you speak of the religion and friends of Mr. and Mrs. Darrell as you did just now, I do feel very angry. You will think me rude in saying this, perhaps; but although I have been among Catholics ever since I left home, I can assure you that your words this morning have been the only unkind ones I have heard all the time I have been at Harleyford. Good morning," and Marion passing quickly on, left the pastor at the gate of his own church, looking very angry and uncomfortable.

"How stupid you are, to be sure, about Catholics!" exclaimed his wife. "I know you will never cease, till you get into hot water with every one in the parish; you are already on bad terms with the Churchwardens, and at daggers drawn with the Guardians. I wonder how much the Dissenters care whether you approve of their love-feasts or not, while, as for the Romanists, of course they make fun of you; and can they help laughing, when they see their very name act on you like the red cloak on a Spanish bull? How you bothered that poor girl, just because she happens to be staying with Catholics! Half the good families are growing disgusted, and you will soon have your congregation getting as sick and tired of such nonsense as I am."

"I must do my duty, nevertheless," replied her husband.

"Your duty!" she repeated impatiently; "it

seems a strange kind of duty that consists in your setting your own parishioners by the ears with each other! You must begin to practice what you preach, depend upon it, if you want to do your duty."

Poor Mr. Gardiner groaned under the yoke of his Xantippe, and writhed beneath the rattle of his golden fetters.

That afternoon, much to the delight of Joe and his sisters, Marion went with them to church. Father Stirling preached, and his subject was the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. First he told the story of the Star of Bethlehem shedding its mild light over the pagan world, and of the three kings that followed it, leaving their thrones and diadems, to seek an Infant, lying in a manger. Then he spoke of the Star of Truth, whose soft ray gleams suddenly on the hitherto darkened vision, and lights up a path that must be followed, even though it should lead from riches to poverty, and from honor to contempt. He counted the cost of such a passage faithfully, but described the glorious recompense to be found for its sacrifices in the treasure-house of the Church, of the love of God, and the prayers of Mary; and while his eyes gleamed with fervor, and his voice trembled with emotion, he spoke of the Sacred Heart; spoke of it with its human yearning and divine love, its earthly sympathies and its almighty power. He talked of the dying life to be lived for God, of the living death for the world, and of that interior life which is the soul that animates all the Christian virtues.

And then, turning suddenly to the altar, he stretched forth his hand, and appealed to God Himself, as a witness to the truth of every word that he had uttered. The action was a momentary impulse, but it touched one little Protestant to the heart, and from that moment Marion Howard felt that Jesus, God and Man, was before her in the Tabernacle. Her head had been convinced, her heart was now penetrated, and when the little bell tinkled amidst the hushed breath of the congregation, when the benediction, not of earth, fell on the kneeling worshippers, Marion, like a second Thomas, cried, prostrate before the same Lord and Master, "My Lord and my God!"

The two sisters and Joe lingered in the church so long after benediction, that the afternoon twilight faded into darkness, but still Marion remained with Father Stirling, whom she had sought at the close of the service. It would be hard to say which of the three prayed the most devoutly in the dark church, whose only light was the fitful gleam of the tabernacle. It was a solemn hour to each, especially to the young sailor, whose warm heart had clung to the little heretic, even from their childhood, and he bowed his head before the image of Mary, and prayed long and fervently.

When at last Marion joined them, it was in company with Father Stirling, and they all returned to the Cedars. While the girls were up stairs the priest mentioned Marion's visit to his friends. "She has commissioned me to tell you this," he observed, in conclusion, "and I can say, never in my life have

I seen any one so resolved in so short a period of time. She has made good use of her visit to you, for she already understands all the leading doctrines of the Church quite well. I was many times astonished at the pertinence of her remarks, and the depth of her questions and answers. She seems very intelligent."

Joe's eyes danced with pleasure.

"Well, Father, you have indeed brought us good news," said Mr. Darrell.

"There are one or two points she is rather uninstructed in, even now," said Father Stirling. "But she must come to me as often as she likes."

"I wonder whether she will meet with much opposition," said Mr. Darrell, musingly. "I should not much like to have to play at cross purposes with that mother of hers. She has wonderfully softened down of late, I believe; but she used to have a tremendous spirit."

"As a school girl, she certainly had," observed his wife.

"O, later than that, my dear. I never saw much of her before her marriage, but I know that poor Howard never got on so well with her as when he let her have her own way. I have often heard him say, that she could bear anything better than contradiction, and this is unfortunately just what she will have now, and I feel half afraid."

"But she is very fond of Marion," returned his wife; "and as this is, I am sure, the first time that the child has ever acted contrary to her wishes in life, I have no doubt the storm will soon blow over;

at any rate, it will not do to meet troubles half way. I think it is only natural though, that Protestant parents should feel these things severely; fancy what we should endure if it was one of our children."

"If I turned Mormonite, for instance, or went over to Mr. Gardiner," said Joe.

"The cases are not parallel," replied Father Stirling; "where is the Catholic parent who would not rather see his son dead than that he should come to this? But, if Protestants felt as deeply, would they allow their children to read the books of other sects, and go to other places of worship, as they do?"

"I think Marion will make a good little Catholic," observed Mrs. Darrell.

"As far as I can judge," replied Father Stirling, "it seems to have been the doctrine of the Real Presence that first attracted her. She herself traces everything to her conversation with you, the evening before you both called upon me."

Mrs. Darrell smiled. "Does it not seem," she observed, "that there are some minds into which a belief in the Blessed Sacrament flashes instantaneously, like light into a room the moment the shutters are opened?"

"Exactly so; and you have been very happy to have been the first to unbar those shutters."

"Not so, Father," replied the lady; "they were too hard and high for me, though I tried my best; it was your strong hand, after all, that let in the light."

"*Non nobis Domine, sed nomini tuo da glorium,*" sang the priest, as the girls reëntered the room.

They spent a very happy evening; Joe was full of fun, and told sea stories and college scrapes by the dozen. Father Stirling and Mr. Darrell played at chess in one corner, while Edith and Emily played and sang. Every one was surprised when ten o'clock struck, none more so than Marion, who had been chatting with Mrs. Darrell during the greater part of the evening.

"You have not felt quite so uncomfortable about the Catholic Sunday to-night, as you did some few years since, have you?" asked the latter of her young companion.

"No; but even then Father Stirling made me so thoroughly see the spirit of Catholic Sunday recreations, that I could never misunderstand them again."

"The Church, dear child," said Mrs. Darrell, "is too jealous a guardian of her children's souls to countenance anything injurious to their spiritual welfare, and that she not only permits, but encourages such recreations, is shown by Father Stirling's presence amongst us to-night. Do as the Church tells you, and all responsibility is immediately shifted from you to her; she bears the burden, while you go free. O, Marion! if there be a liberty on earth, it is in the obedience rendered by the Catholic to his Church. Can you understand this? Perhaps not yet."

"Yes, I think I can. A Catholic is like a child, who acts simply in obedience to its mother."

"With this difference," replied Mrs. Darrell; "an earthly parent, with all her solicitude, may misdirect her child, whereas, the Church cannot err. I know, of course, that you already understand this well; but just let me hear you explain, in your own words, this 'terrific dogma,' the Infallibility of the Church. Fancy that I am mamma, and that you are trying to convince her that you have done right in becoming a Catholic."

A shadow fell across poor Marion's face, and she sighed heavily; but she shook back her curls, as was her wont in making a fresh determination.

"Really, Mrs. Darrell," she exclaimed, cheerfully, "I have thought comparatively little about the authority or the infallibility of the Church. My one idea has been the Blessed Sacrament. I know that our Lord is upon the altar with us, and I cannot think He would leave His Church in error, and yet be with it unceasingly."

"I perfectly understand you, my dear child," replied her friend; "but though this feeling of calm repose is, as far as I can judge, the best disposition for you individually, still it will not do for mamma, and still less for Mr. Lisle, for I suppose you will have to give a reason to him also for 'the hope that is in you,' will you not?"

The warm blood shot across Golden-hair's cheeks and brow, and then back again to her heart, leaving her paler than before. Not Curtius himself, not the Decii, ever gave life more heroically than Marion Howard now laid the happiness of her life upon the

altar of conscience, nor was the sacrifice less precious, that it was made in silence. Quick as she was, Mrs. Darrell did not read the troubled look aright, but supposed that it simply arose from dread of the controversy she had imagined.

"I dare not think yet of what any one in Ennington may say to me," replied she; "I can only put my trust in God. When the moment to answer their questions arrives, I must look to Him to tell me what to say; but it is a moment I truly dread." And absorbed by painful thoughts, Marion sat for some few minutes looking silently into the fire.

"May I ask what it is, that is so to be dreaded?" asked Father Stirling, who, having finished his game, now seated himself at the centre-table.

Mrs. Darrell repeated the conversation.

"God Himself, my dear Miss Howard," said the priest, "has flashed the whole truth upon your mind at once, rather than suffered you to learn it word by word, and line by line. As to myself, it was much longer before I saw my way into the Church, though, looking back, I cannot imagine how I could ever have been so blind as not to see the marks that evidently distinguish her as the spouse of Jesus Christ."

"I wish, Father Stirling, you would tell me just a little about the infallibility of the Church."

"I am afraid it is rather late to commence such a subject this evening," said the priest, looking at his watch; "but I dare say I shall have time to say a few words upon it before supper; at any rate, I can give you the salient points, which you can

afterwards study for yourself. To commence then, Miss Howard, I would remark that Protestants as well as Catholics admit the fact, that before our Blessed Lord left the world He established a Church. The former are, however, as usual, divided on the subject; for by the term Church they mean a distinct body, such as the 'Church of England;' while others, Dissenters for instance, take it simply to imply those who are faithful to God, let them belong to whatever denomination they may. The latter doctrine cannot, however, relate to the visible body of Christ's Spouse on earth, and it is to this that He has promised infallibility in His pastors, and which He has commanded us, as His flock, to obey; for a body of believers whose membership should consist only in internal acts, could be recognized only by the eye of God Himself, and could not be said to constitute a visible Church.

"According to the Catechism, the Church of Christ must have four marks—she must be One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. One, for there must be one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism—Holy, for God Himself is holy, and the Church that leads us to Him must be holy too—Catholic, for it must 'teach all nations'—Apostolic, because to the Apostles alone—'go *ye* and teach'—was delegated the care of souls. Let us consider the first question of unity. I can assure you," and he turned to Mrs. Darrell, "that, although I lived for twenty-six years among Protestants, I rarely found two who thought alike on every doctrine of religion. Leaving individuals, however, out of the question, we

will speak only of their general disunion, and that only with regard to important doctrines. Take, for instance, the subject of Baptismal Regeneration. Can any article of faith be more important, more momentous than this? Now, I remember once, when I was a young man, asking a clergyman of the Anglican Church, one of the 'Evangelical party,' why infants were baptized. As a matter of course he could not tell me, because, poor fellow, he dared not say on tradition, (which is the actual fact,) and yet by no manner or means could he wrest any text of the Scriptures into a warrant for infant baptism. So he said a great deal about 'Suffer little children to come unto me,' which has nothing to do with the question, and talked of St. Paul baptizing the household of Stephanas, amongst which, he said, most likely there were some little children,* but that was all; and when I asked him what baptismal regeneration meant, he said it was a popish superstition, for though baptism conferred a certain grace on the soul, it could not in any way remit sin. What he made of our Lord's words, 'Ye must be born again of water and the Spirit,' I have not the slightest idea. Not very long after this I heard the following words from a Church of England pulpit: 'If your infant be sick, brethren, bring him to the font; do not delay; have him baptized at once, or you will never meet your child in heaven.' What, then, is the teaching of the Anglican Church? Does she believe baptism to be regenerative or not? Christ promised to lead

* An answer actually returned.

His Church into all truth, when the Spirit of Truth should come. What, then, can truth be coincident with two such extremes as heaven, and no heaven for the unbaptized child? The sweet and bitter water from the same fountain were nothing to this. Again, there are churches, belonging to the Anglican Establishment, in which the communion is celebrated frequently, (in some I have been told every morning), and in this communion some of the communicants believe that they receive the Body and Blood of Christ; while others, and indeed the greater part, believe that what they receive is mere bread and wine. Now, what does this latter extreme say to the tenets of the first extreme of this same church on this point? Does it find any epithet too harsh with which to brand such papistical innovations? Yet, these two classes are members of the same church, both professing union with the one Lord, one faith, one baptism! What does the Low-churchman say to that answer in his own Catechism touching the communion, 'that the inward part or thing signified, is the Body and Blood of Christ, which are *verily* and *indeed* taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper?' What does he say to the confession heard in the Tractarian Church, or to the translation, almost verbatim, into English, of the absolution we give, and which, poor man, he is obliged to read in his visitation of the sick? What does he say to the fasts, still marked by his own prayer book, and still practised so religiously by members of his own church? What of that proudly vaunted

succession, so gloried in by his own brethren? Why, he laughs at it all, and styles those brethren fools! In short, the Low-churchman looks upon his Puseyite brother as a sort of connecting link between truth and error, very much in the same theological world what the ape is in the natural one, forgetting that as members of the same church, they must stand or fall together. And what says the High-churchman in his turn? Why, he despises his Low-church brother from his very heart, talks of him as bringing scandal upon the church, classes him with the Dissenters, laughs at him, derides him, but cannot ignore him, uncomfortable eye-sore though he be! 'Behold, he shall lead you unto all truth,' is an awkward text for a church, one-half of whose children anathematizes the most cherished doctrines of the other.

"With regard to the second mark that is to distinguish the Spouse of Christ, her holiness, do we find it in the Anglican Church? Can the respectability of her modern pastors and professors merit this glorious attribute for a religion whose doctrines were disseminated by secular authority, represented in the persons of royal tyrants and sacrilegious nobles? A simple negative may seem to be a summary disposal of the subject; but do we need more, while the infamous characters of the first reformers, so-called, are patent to every one who has courage to learn the truth, and while the history of their so-called Reformation is familiar to us, in all its hideous details, as the nursery rhymes

of our babyhood? Let Protestants answer the question that fell from the lips of our Divine Lord: 'Shall men gather figs from thorns, and grapes from thistles?' and then, if they can, let them look for holiness in the religion of Luther, Zwinglius, or Calvin!

"The third point of the church, her Catholicity, need hardly be touched upon in reference to the English Church, and that, for the simple reason that she is the only Church of a portion of one nation, having neither position, power, nor jurisdiction, in any country but England and a few of its colonies. She is essentially a National Institution, and nothing more.

"The fourth point, namely, the claim of Anglicanism to the apostolic succession, we will consider presently. Let us now look into the Catholic Church, and let us see on what she founds her title to be the One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church of Christ. Just now I told you I had never found two Protestants whose creed was precisely the same; now, with my hand upon my heart, I tell you, that I have rarely found two Catholics to differ. Go back with me to those days when Jesus, seated among his chosen twelve, first spoke these words: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' The ark floating on the dark waters of the flood, is a splendid metaphor of that Church, within the precincts of which safety alone is to be found."

"But people may be saved who are out of

the Church, you said this afternoon," replied Marion.

"Out of the visible Church, my child; but the Church of Christ always considers those as her children who have been baptized. God is not a hard task-master, looking to reap where He has not sown. We have good reason even to believe, that the truth is frequently revealed to such souls, in those long, silent hours that so often precede dissolution. We have, moreover, the hope, that he who has kept faithful in the uncertain gloom, while others have sometimes unhappily, stumbled in full light, receives his reward accordingly. But, to return to our subject, namely, the unity of the Catholic Church. Do not even her enemies admit her unchangeableness? What she was in her earliest days, when her Bishops were ex-fishermen, and her temples the catacombs of Rome, she now is. Does any proud spirit attempt an innovation; the thunders of her excommunication fall upon him, and he may call himself what he will, but he is cut off from her, plucked out, cast away, till he repent, or until he is summoned to answer for his despised birthright, at the bar of the great assize.

"If you, Miss Howard, knowing as much as you do now of our religion, were to ask me what proof I should give of the holiness of the Church, I should tell you that the best and truest answer is the one that lies most deeply buried in the recesses of a Catholic heart. I speak of that sweet familiarity with the sacraments and sacrifice

of the Church, that I trust will, in God's own time, flood with its intensity the whole of your being. But if a Protestant asked me this, your mamma for instance, I should return again to the little Catechism, and tell her that 'the Church is holy because she teaches a holy doctrine, offers to all the means of holiness, and is distinguished by the eminent holiness of so many thousands of her children.' Of course she would say this was simply assertion, and would ask for proof. Then I should compare the Church to one of those grand old temples, raised by our fathers to the glory of God, and should show her that as in them, every line of their architecture points to, and culminates in the sanctuary, so in the Church every dogma, every doctrine, every symbol, every ceremony points to, and culminates in the Hill of Calvary. Then I should speak of the seven Sacraments. Of Baptism, that sets its seal forever on the brow from which it has chased the shadow of original sin. Of Confirmation, that seals the soul to all eternity, as the shrine of the Holy Ghost. Of Ordination, that seals for life and death, the heart, the hand, the whole of the priest to God. I should tell her of Penance, that removes the sinner from his sin, as far as the east is from the west; of Matrimony, that blesses the joys and sorrows of life; of Extreme Unction, that soothes the departing soul; and then I would tell her of the Holy Eucharist, the sun and life of man below. She could not tell me that these seven mystical pillars of the Church were not means of holiness, and I should go on to

tell her of the eminent holiness of the children of that Church. Of the Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins, Widows, and Hermits; of her clergy, regular and secular; of her Religious Orders, active, contemplative, and ascetic, that have graced every age of Christianity; and of the pious souls, not the less saintly because perhaps unseen, who are gracing it now. In answer to this, she would tell me of the purity of the Protestant religion. I should point inflexibly to its originators and promoters. She would tell me how Protestantism teaches the love of God, and belief in Jesus Christ as the Saviour. I should speak of the flower plucked off from the plant, fair to a certain extent with the beauty of the parent tree, preserved for a short time by artificial means, but doomed to die, nay, dying, because it had no root. She would point finally to Protestant piety, and I to something deeper still, inasmuch as the fire-tried constancy of solid virtue is deeper than the regularity of a life free from gross sin. Protestantism takes a man as he appears, the Church as he is before God, tried and tested. If you only knew anything of the process of canonization, and how strict and searching it is, you would understand better what I mean. Protestantism can appreciate good men, but that is all. She cannot go with the Church into highways and byways, into retired cells and broken down hovels, and bring forth names long eminent in heaven, though perhaps unknown to the great world. And even could she find such names, she could not try them as the

Church tries them, in a seven-fold heated furnace of inquiry, or weigh them as she weighs them, in the balances of perfection. And how, you will say, can the Catholic Church do this? Simply because the Spirit of God is to guide her into all truth. His is the unerring hand that has raised each saint to the altars of the Church, in the same way that His has been the Voice that had called each to a sanctity as much surpassing natural virtue, as the New Jerusalem, that shall have its foundation in the everlasting hills, shall surpass the cities that are founded on the ephemeral rock of this world.

"It would be an insult to your historical and geographical knowledge to talk to you of the universality of the Church. Truly, most truly is she Catholic; and that in the widest acceptation of the term, for she covers the earth as the waters cover the sea! She enters with her sweet intrusiveness wherever men will let her, teaching ever that one same doctrine which without intermission she has taught throughout all the ages of the Christian era. The world has sent its votaries abroad—so has she. Ambition has conquered kingdoms—she has subdued hearts. Self-interest has conciliated savage tribes—she has lived among them or died beneath their weapons; and when enterprise and science have gone forth, ploughing the oceans, visiting unknown lands, wandering in arid deserts, and penetrating pathless forests, meekly she has followed in their wake, gleaning what they despised for the garner of God. Nor do we find

her in these distant lands only in the persons of venturing missionaries, these, and the bones of these, are to be found in every quarter of the globe; but we find also churches firmly established, congregations ever increasing, complete hierarchies dependent on the See of Rome. Yes, truly Catholic, for as the morning sun passes on its way, lighting up a dawn in every land on which it sheds its beams, in all the twenty-four hours there is not a sun-rise that is not welcomed at some point of its meridian, by the '*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus,*' of the Mass.

"We reserved the claims set forth by the Protestant establishment to be the Church founded by Jesus Christ, and built up by the Apostles, that we might consider them with those of the Catholic Church. It would be a protracted though easy task to dispose of the conflicting definitions of the apostolic succession, given by the high, low, moderate, and broad church party, but as you are only interested in those with whose sentiments you have all your life sympathized, I need say very little on the subject. We will not therefore suffer the breath of inquiry to approach that fine point, so carefully polished and jealously guarded by the Tractarians, namely, the valid ordination of two of Queen Elizabeth's Bishops—well may they guard it, seeing it is the one foundation upon which they build the whole of their arguments. But this question is only important to that section of Protestantism that looks upon ordination, if not as a sacrament, as at least the cause of effects that would

certainly be sacramental, and such a belief is confined to Tractarianism and its variations. An ordinary, or rather a common-place Anglican, looks upon ordination simply as a certain serious ceremony, that sets apart certain serious men to perform certain serious functions; and though his ordination service contains the apostolic charge of binding and loosing, remitting and retaining, he betakes himself to the swallowing system, and says virtually, that it means nothing more than 'go, and be a respectable parson.' Still, however, though low-church Anglicans thus get rid of these words as a *charge*, they still stand as a *text*, and must be explained, wrested, or distorted, somehow.

"They generally give us one of two solutions, that is to say, some deny the words addressed to St. Peter ever to have passed beyond himself; others assert that he never received anything more from his Divine Master than a charge of elder brotherhood. Now what could be more inconsistent than the first answer? Would our Lord have conferred a supernatural power on St. Peter, by which he might direct souls, forgive sins, provide for the spiritual sustenance of the faithful, in short, govern the Church infallibly, if He had intended to take this power away again upon the death of St. Peter? Did all sin, sorrow, and perplexity pass away with his generation, so that spiritual guidance should never be wanted more? If those who believed that the great apostle received a supernatural power, but that it ceased with him, could only

see how inconsistent they make our Lord, they would be possibly abashed at their own irreverence. For they acknowledge with us, that when Christ ascended into heaven His human ministry was ended; and yet they cannot see, that before He left the world, He must have arranged His Church until the end of time. What would have been the use of an authority, an infallibility, a miraculous power, a pardoning power, in short, such a God-like power, as they must see was conferred on this great apostle and his faithful brethren, if they read their Bibles, if it were destined to pass away in the course of a few years, to leave the Church still in possession of such a gift as the atonement, and yet wandering unguided in the darkness of such a world as this? More consistent certainly are the second class of whom I spoke, who deny that anything like a supernatural authority was ever given to St. Peter at all, though, at the same time, how they fancy they reconcile such an opinion with the Scriptures, I cannot understand.

"I remember once, when a very young man, attending a Wesleyan tea-meeting. After the tea and plum-cake had been discussed, the speeches (perhaps I ought to say the addresses) began. What the generality of these addresses were, whether good, bad, or indifferent, I certainly do not now remember, but there was one I have never forgotten. It was on '*isms*,' and having inveighed against Atheism, Deism, Socinianism, Mesmerism, and Mormonism, the speaker concluded with two, which as a telling peroration he had reserved to

the last, namely, Rheumatism and Romanism. Why the latter should have been classed with wrung sinews and aching bones, I have never yet discovered. It was certainly an original conceit of the speaker. But the anecdote with which he wound up his discourse was the cream of the affair. I will give it to you in his own words: 'Once upon a time, I took my Bible in my hand and went to visit an old Romanist. Well, my dear brethren, I talked to him a long time about the sinfulness of his heart, and tried to teach him how faith in Christ could alone save him, and of how little use prayers to the Virgin Mary and the saints would be, to save his soul from hell. The poor old man, my friends, only shook his gray head, and began to talk to me of the Church that could not err, and which he said would carry him to heaven, if he only believed and obeyed it. 'Look here,' says he, catching hold of my Bible, and fumbling over the leaves till he found the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew, 'read that.' I looked, and there were these words: 'Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.' Then didn't the old fellow look triumphant at me through his spectacles. 'Wait a bit, my man,' thought I, 'we'll have you yet. Well,' says I to him, 'so you think that warrant enough for putting your trust in Peter, do you?' 'Bless the man,' cried the old Romanist, 'isn't it as plain as a pike-staff, that St. Peter, bless him, was made the head of the Church? and sure he couldn't deceive us, nor be deceived himself!'

'Stop,' says I, 'let's us look a bit further down in the very same chapter, and what do we see? why, these words spoken to the very same Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou art an offence unto me," and upon this, the old fellow, having nothing to say, could only revenge himself by giving me a good crack on the head with my own Bible.' "Such," continued Father Stirling, "was the story I heard at the Methodist tea-party, though I must say the denouement seemed so extraordinary, that even then, though prepared for any enormity on the part of Romanism, I hardly believed it. A crack on the head would be a most unconvincing argument in favor of a religion, and would certainly have given me, had I been the Methodist, an increased distaste for Rheumatism and Romanism! For my own part, however, were I in the place of his antagonist now, I should be only too glad to have the opportunity of drawing my opponent's attention to the beautiful consistency of the teaching of the Church, as exemplified by this very chapter. Peter the Pope, he who is to be guided by the Spirit of God, to be led into all truth, to be preserved from all error—the rock upon which the Church is to be founded, is one thing. Peter the Man, impetuous, erring, fallible, blindly striving to stay his Master from the salvation of the world, another. An infallible Church of fallible men! No wonder such a prodigy as this sounds strange to unbelieving ears!

"I have already shown you, though feebly, very feebly, that the Church is one, Holy and Catholic.

What are her claims as Apostolic? Glance at her as she stands, 'exalted above the hills that all nations may flow unto her.' Look at her machinery, with its one universal language, (unalterable because no longer spoken;) its sacraments unchanged and unchangeable; its ceremonies; its priests; its bishops; its cardinals; its pope, successor of St. Peter, upon whom the keys of heaven itself in the power of binding and loosing, remitting and retaining, were bestowed, and to whom was given that parting injunction of our Lord, 'Feed my sheep, feed my lambs.' Read the story of the Church; it is very simple. Eighteen hundred years ago, as the iron of the soldier's spear entered the side of Jesus, hanging upon the cross, drops of blood, the last drops of the blood shed for the redemption of the world, trickled from the wound. In those ruddy drops the Church took its source. It was a tiny spring, but grew wider and wider, as age after age it rolled, now through the dark shadows of Paganism, now through the very heart of heresy and of anarchy in the empires of the world, struggling in its course with many a rock, but ever flowing onward, ever widening. Do men ask what is the ocular demonstration of the authenticity of the Church? Its very existence—'Behold, I am with you!' Who but the great 'I AM' could have brought His Spouse, bright and undefiled, as in the first morning of her birth, through the fires of martyrdom, and the blackness and corruption of such a world as this?

"Yet Protestants tell us that even had such a

sacrament existed, the chain of the apostolic succession must have been broken amid the frequent confusion of the hierarchy, and assert that two Popes have ruled Christendom at the same time more than once; but had there been half a dozen at the same time, instead of one, there would only have been five more schismatics for the true pontiff to anathematize. The existence of counterfeit money does not make the golden coin more or less valuable. More than this, supposing that the archives of the Church were so confused and conglomerated, (which certainly they never were,) that looking back through the past ages from the present day, we could not distinctly trace the apostolic succession from Peter to Pius the Ninth, (supposing all this, which is perfectly untrue,) would it signify? Should we doubt the existence of a river, with the source and mouth of which we were perfectly acquainted, because part of its course lay through an unexplored territory, through which we could not follow it in all its windings? Impossible! while we had ocular demonstration of its existence in its waters.

"It is getting too late this evening for us to treat this great subject at any length, and the books you are reading enter so fully into it, that I do not feel at all uneasy at leaving you with them. Remember this, however, as a parting word: if there be a Church on earth to whom Christ, who cannot lie, spoke the truth when He promised to guide her into all truth, it is the Catholic Church alone. It is impossible for a Church to be infalli-

ble and yet deny its own infallibility, since that very denial is an error in itself; and what Church but the Roman Catholic Church, dares, or ever has dared, to lay claim to such a mighty prerogative? No wonder that her enemies gaze in astonishment at her mighty pretensions, so different to the tiny voices of the puny sects that have dissented from the dissenting Church! No wonder that men stare in amazement at this religion that has kept its ground, in spite of persecution, misrepresentation, envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness! Catholicity is indeed an enigma to those without; despising ostentation, she yet heaps together all that is rich, and grand, and sumptuous; inculcating Christian charity, she cuts off, root and branch, every soul that differs from one iota of her creed; and preaching humility from every one of her pulpits, she yet cries to every sect beyond her pale, 'I am right and you are wrong.' And yet there is nothing paradoxical in this. There is one answer, and the one answer only to it all, 'The Lord is in His Holy Temple, let all the world keep silence before Him.'"

CHAPTER XVI.

THREE more weeks of winter, snow and frost passed by, of festivity for the rich, and hard living for the poor. Three more weeks of silent reading, long, deep prayers and earnest conversation in the presbytery parlor, and again it was Sunday morning. Mass was just over, and the greater part of the congregation had dispersed; only a few pious souls lingered, communing still with Him, from whose bright presence they seemed loth to part. But, at last, even the most fervent had departed, and our little party alone remained in the church; and then the altar tapers were once more lighted, and Father Stirling, wearing his stole and surplice, appeared at the sacristy door. Marion was led to the altar steps by Mrs. Darrell, while the rest of the family and the Seymours knelt around. A recantation was read, the waters of conditional baptism flowed, the words of absolution were spoken, and Mrs. Darrell clasped the Catholic Golden-hair to her heart.

Who can describe the rapture of that moment, when the dreary doubts and misgivings of the past, and the dread foreshadowing of coming anger, and perhaps persecution, are lost in the deep unut-

terable joy of the present: "I am a Catholic!" And who can describe the feeling of gratitude that swells, at such a season, the hearts that have fostered the bud, and watched in hourly prayer the expanding of the blossom? Our little heroine's friends felt too much to speak, and half reached home before even Emily found words in which to congratulate her; but, the ice once broken, a tide of loving welcome flowed around her, and it was a large and joyful party that morning that breakfasted at the Cedars.

About a week afterwards, Marion was sitting very thoughtfully in her room, with an open letter from her mother before her, announcing her intention of returning to Ennington in the course of a few days. It expressed a wish that she should, at the same time, bring her visit at the Cedars to a close, to assist in entertaining her aunt, who, Mrs. Howard said, purposed returning with her from London.

"What shall I do?" cried Marion, to herself; "shall I write and tell her all at once, or wait till we meet? I really do not know which would be best, but I will see what Father Stirling advises."

At this moment there was a tap at the door, and, a servant entering, placed a card in her hand. Marion glanced at it, and read, while the letters danced before her—

"Rev. H. Lisle."

"I will be down directly," she said, with a wonderful effort to be calm, and the girl retired. When she had left the room, instinctively our little hero-

ine sank upon her knees, and remained so motionless for full five minutes, that one might have said, a soul had fled in the act of prayer; but when she rose, an extreme pallor was the only visible sign of the inward conflict. Marion descended the stairs without encountering any of the family, and placed her hand on the handle of the library door. Twice she withdrew it, but, making the sign of the cross, and, shaking back her curls, she grasped it a third time, with a strong hand, and entered with a firm foot.

Mr. Lisle rose to meet her as she advanced, an unwonted agitation, on his own part, prevented him from observing hers.

"You are surprised to see me," he remarked, after a short and rather awkward pause, which had followed the first greetings.

"Rather; but I am very pleased."

Golden-hair, was that true?

"When are you going back to Ennington?" he asked.

"Mamma has written for me to go next week."

"So I understand, from a note I received in answer to a letter I wrote, asking permission to come and see you here. The Ennington people will be very glad to have you back, the old women are calling out sadly for flannels this cold weather, and poor Mrs. Dobson is overwhelmed with needlework and teaching. In the latter department I have helped to set things to right, but the former was rather out of my province. The school-treat, too, has been waiting for your presence; the chil-

dren would not think half so much of their buns, if Miss Howard were not there to distribute them."

Marion tried to smile, but the attempt was a sickly one.

"You do not look well," said the curate. "I am afraid you have been keeping late hours."

"Yes, I have," answered Marion.

"You must get home as soon as you can; we can ill spare your roses in these winter days. How have you enjoyed yourself?"

"Very much. Every one has been very kind."

"Is Mr. Stirling living here still?" asked the clergyman, after a short pause.

"Yes. I do not suppose he will ever leave."

"Poor fellow!" cried Mr. Lisle, in a tone of deep commiseration; "do you often see him?"

"Yes, very often."

"Has he ever mentioned me to you?"

"Not once," said Marion.

"I have been entrusted with heaps of messages from all sorts of people," said Mr. Lisle, and he commenced a long description of the events that had taken place in Ennington during her absence, for which Marion felt profoundly thankful, so difficult she found anything like conversation.

"Shall I go and bring Mrs. Darrell?" she asked, growing more confident, as she found that the visit she had taken at first for one of espionage, was beginning to wear simply the aspect of a friendly call.

"Not yet," said the curate, hurriedly; "I have several things to say to you first."

Marion's heart sank within her.

"I have not told you yet the object of my visit."

"No," said Marion, turning very sick.

"I have come," replied he, "because, unless I had run over to visit you to-day, I should not have seen you for a very long time. I start the day after to-morrow for Sandiham, in the south of England. Marion, my ministry at Ennington is ended!"

Had those words been uttered in Marion's ears a month before, life itself would have seemed a blank; as it was, she did not appear to understand him, but looked at him strangely, almost vacantly. Hope rose within his heart, for he misunderstood her.

"Yes, I am going away," he continued. "It seems a strange thought to me, though, that I shall never minister in Ennington church again. I preached a little farewell sermon last night to my dear old friends. I think there are many who are really sorry."

Marion remained silent.

"Dr. Stebbing will have to get another curate directly. I hope you will like him."

"Why are you going so soon?" she asked at length, abruptly.

"Because I must take possession of my new living at once—the one that you know has been promised me for nearly two years. It is in a lovely part of Devonshire. The gentleman in whose gift it is, is one of my oldest and dearest friends, and the parish being largely populated,

there is, he assures me, a large sphere of usefulness open to a Christian minister. If it had not been so, sincerely I may say, I might not have accepted it, much as I require an advancement on my present liberal income. The living is worth about £500 a year—a wonderful increase, is it not," he added, smiling, "for one who has been passing rich upon £120? Sir William Temple tells me that the parsonage house is beautifully situated in its own grounds, and the society around is all that the most difficult to satisfy could desire? Am I not fortunate?"

"Very," said Marion, whose poor little head was whirling.

"Suppose I tell you I am not satisfied."

"Then you are very hard to please," replied Marion, with a touch of her natural spirit. "But they say people never are contented here below;" and rising as she spoke, she walked to the window, and stood looking out into the foggy twilight.

Her companion rose and placed himself beside her. Marion trembled as his hand was laid softly on her shoulder.

"It is in your power, Marion, to make me quite contented."

The hour had come at last.

"It was to speak to you of this," he continued, "that I came here to-day. Marion, dearest, there has been one bright thought that, ever since you were a child, has made the very sunlight of my heart. It is for this that I have been so anxious to get the living—this that has induced me to quit

my labor of love at Ennington; for, looking back on many little incidents in our intercourse, I cannot bring my heart to think that I am altogether indifferent to you, Golden-hair, in a little while to be the mistress of my new parsonage, my own little wife?"

A sudden shake of the ringlets made him fall back. Had he miscalculated his power? Did she not love him, after all? The face she turned on him was so white, so death-like in its agony, that the curate fairly quivered with perplexed emotion. In an instant the golden dream of each life lay shattered, as, with every muscle rigid with determination, she exclaimed:

"Mr. Lisle, it is impossible!"

"Impossible!" he repeated. "Do you not love me, Marion?"

"It is not that," she replied, shaking her head slowly; "it is not that; but the will of God has separated us—I am a Catholic."

"A Catholic!" he exclaimed, recoiling in horror. "What do you—what can you mean?"

"That, being convinced that it is the one true Church of God, I have embraced the Catholic religion."

He could not answer—he did not attempt it, but seating himself upon the sofa and pressing his hands to his throbbing temples, he gazed at the wreck of his happiness, as once when a boy he had gazed at the fragments of a broken vase he had just shivered.

Marion continued: "Had it not been for this, I

would have lived and died for you, and my only aim in life should have been to have made you happy. What you have been to me, what you are still, God only knows—He, too, only knows what I feel in speaking, as I am speaking now. 'But whoso loveth father and mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me;' if they are to be given up for God, what must be said of any other earthly tie or affection? Do not, pray do not look like that; any burst of anger would be better than that strange, stony look."

A groan was the only reply.

"Could I have borne anything myself, to have saved you from this, I would have done so. I would have died a thousand deaths rather than have caused you and mamma this suffering; but it was not to be! Poor, dear mamma! You will go to your new home, and soon forget me; but she—it is too dreadful to think of—should she feel it as much as you do! Perhaps, however, she will remember that this is the first time I have ever acted in opposition to her, and will let me follow the dictates of my own conscience undisturbed. I have dreaded meeting you more than I can possibly say, though I never thought that it would be like this. But I am very glad that the first shock is over; when mamma and Edward know it, I shall be comparatively happy.'

"In their misery!" broke in Mr. Lisle. "O! Marion, what are you made of?"

"Of something very weak, I fear," she returned, "or human sorrow at the pain I am causing, would

not triumph as it does just now, over the happiness of having found God in His own bright and beautiful Church. But, dark as my future prospect is at this moment, I would not change it for any lot on earth had I to be a Protestant again. The happiness of being a Catholic compensates perfectly, I am convinced, for any misfortune that can befall us here below."

"O, why is it," cried Mr. Lisle, almost wildly, "that this awful delusion, this mockery of a religion, should thus be destined to cross my path? What have I done, that those I love should be swept from me by a doom far worse than death! Marion, I could have knelt by your grave and said, 'Thy will be done!' but now years will not bring me resignation; the thought of what you were, compared with what you soon will be, will haunt me like a spectre, for, depend upon it, all that is most beautiful in woman, tarnishes beneath the influence of such a creed as Romanism. But even now it is not too late, I am sure it is not; come home with me, Marion, come back to Ennington, and let me show you all the fallacy of these arguments that have blinded you, bright and cold as winter sunshine. Such a mind as yours may be bowed, but it cannot yet be utterly broken down to the depths of their superstition! Do not let this fearful blow fall on your mother, no longer young; do not let that brother, who is looking forward to the moment when he shall clasp his little Golden-hair to his heart, find her separated from him by a deeper gulf than the ocean waves that now divide them;

and, if anything I can say from the depths of my own poor heart can move you, do not let the one dear hope of my life be blighted, for, O Marion, my darling, I love you next to God!"

It was a moment of temptation; and perhaps the black angels smiled in triumph at the white-robed guardian that hovered around his charge. Queen of the Angels, protect thy child!

"Do not ask me," she replied at length, in a voice of such determination that he knew his last hope had fled. "God will be with you all, in His strength you will carry your cross."

"Then I will waste no more time in words. All that remains for me now," he added, after a pause, "is to return to Ennington and write to your mother. Thank God, you are not yet one-and-twenty."

"That makes no difference," replied Marion; "were I only five years of age, my thoughts, my mind, my prayers, would be beyond control. Even if mamma were to force me to attend to her church and kneel with her at prayers, what would be the value of such a foolish victory? If argument and persuasion cannot show me the truth of your religion, coercion never will!" And the spirit of her mother shot from her father's eyes.

"At any rate, we will see!"

She held out her hand, but, without appearing to notice it, he turned away and walked quickly from the room.

As he crossed the vestibule, Mrs. Darrell met

"Mr. Lisle, I believe," she exclaimed; "I thought Marion would have brought you in to join us in the drawing-room. We dine at six, and I hope you will favor us with your company to dinner, even if the long ride compels you to leave us directly afterwards."

"I thank you," said the curate, with constrained politeness, "but I have already dined."

"So we shall have to lose our little friend next week, I hear?" observed Mrs. Darrell.

Mr. Lisle made no reply, except to reach his hat from the stand.

"Are you sure you cannot stay? At least let me offer you a glass of wine, it is such a cold evening."

"Nothing in this house," was the rejoinder; "I wish you good evening;" and, without another word, he opened the door himself and passed out into the gloom.

Mrs. Darrell remained on the spot where he had left her. "Now, poor child," she whispered to herself, "her troubles have begun. God help her! At any rate, come what will, she shall have a home and a mother here."

Her ruminations were cut short by the sudden calling of her name, and the pealing of the library bell, and, running to the room, she found Marion extended on the sofa, and Joe calling for assistance, and pealing the bell with all his might.

It was some time before she was restored to consciousness, and longer still before she could tell them that Mr. Lisle knew all, and had departed to do his worst.

"I thought he was very ungracious when I asked him to stop to dinner," said Mrs. Darrell; "but no wonder he looked black!"

"If he was black, Marion was white!" exclaimed Joe. "I had been hunting on the shelves for a book I left here, for at least two minutes, before I saw her, and, in the half light, I thought she was dying, if not dead."

"I almost wish I was," said Marion, who overheard him

"Hush, my child," said Father Stirling, who had just entered the room, "or I shall have to scold you for trailing your cross instead of carrying it. That would be a great pity, for you would have all the weariness of its weight without the merit of the sacrifice. Cheer up, and remember that the troubles of this life are small in comparison to the great joys our good God will give us in heaven if we are only faithful. No, my dear child, you must love to live till God shall call you. And you will do so, I am sure, for your bravery in this first conflict gives me every hope that you will be worthy of the 'valiant woman,' who will stand beside you in every struggle."

Two days later a letter was placed in Marion's hand, bearing the London post-mark. It was from her mother, and enclosed a note from Mr. Lisle to herself, which ran as follows:

"Dear Mrs. Howard:

"You have no longer a daughter. Marion has given you up to follow an idol of her own imagination. She has become a Romanist, and (backed, I

suppose, by her priests) defies us both; that is, she refuses to listen to anything I can say, and declares that no power on earth can coerce her soul.

"Dearest mother, for come what will, such is the tie between us, much as I love her, I do not counsel gentleness, for I think a little salutary severity may bring her back again. Let her see what she has given up in your love; refuse to meet her except as a Protestant, and, believe me, natural affection, with such a heart as hers, must triumph in the end. My heart is throbbing so fast that I cannot see to write. I feel as if I were on the eve of some fearful illness; come home as soon as you can, for I cannot leave till I have seen you. Your affectionate son,

HENRY LISLE."

The letter from her mother to Marion ran thus:

"The enclosed, received this morning, from Mr. Lisle, has told me of my misery. Yesterday I rejoiced over a letter that gave me, as I thought, a son; to-day I stand transfixed over another, that informs me I have 'no longer a daughter.' Be it so; if you can live without me, it is enough. Go! Those who have so kindly provided you with a new religion, must furnish you also with another mother, and a fresh home. What Henry Lisle advises, I adopt. When you can say, 'Thy God shall be my God,' you shall once more be my child, but not till then. In this I am even more

inexorable than himself, for he would make this a kind of essay to drive you back to me again, a decision to be replaced by something more lenient, should harsher measures fail. But I do not mean it so. It is my ultimatum. O! Marion, what have I done that you should treat me thus? You knew me well in not apprizing me of your intention; had I had a thought of such a thing as this, I would have put a stop to it, whatever had been the result. I hate the Catholic religion; I hate Catholic priests; but, more than either, I hate the presumption of my own child, who thus sets at naught my parental authority! Mind, however, I only write to you thus on the representation of Mr. Lisle; he may be wrong, for you may be only waiting to ask my pardon, and do my bidding. If so, welcome; if not, farewell. M. HOWARD."

"What am I to do?" asked Marion, almost wildly, as she placed the letters in Father Stirling's hand.

"Wait and see," said the priest, quietly, after he had perused them. "He whom you have obeyed will not forsake you. *Dominus providebit.* Mrs. Darrell will take care of you for the present, and, after a little time, perhaps mamma will relent."

"Never, I am afraid," said Marion; "she has never written nor spoken to my father's mother for twelve years, because she once offended her. She prides herself upon her pride; and, to tell you the truth, I have often felt proud of it, too. There is something so majestic in her unbending

character. Out of her own family, Mr. Lisle is the only person with whom she is really familiar; for although she has made acquaintances of a chosen few, she always makes them keep a certain distance. Then, again, she is so determined; you see what she says, (and I know it is true), that if she had known my intentions beforehand, she would have prevented it, whatever had been the result. She would have come and taken me away, I know; and if I had been snatched, in that unsettled state of mind, from every person and from everything Catholic, firm as I thought myself, I might have wandered, especially with Mr. Lisle straining every nerve to win me back again; for, O Father, though those letters say a great deal, you do not yet know all," and Marion related the scene in the library.

"Poor child! Poor child!" said the sympathizing priest. "Does Mrs. Darrell know this?"

"No; I do not wish any one but you to know it, for it would do no good. But if you did not understand all my troubles, you would not be able to manage so well for me."

"Certainly not; it is no use showing a physician half a wound. Poor Lisle! I feel very sorry for him, too. Well, you will stay here for the present?"

"Not for long," replied Marion, firmly; "no, Father, I must be a governess."

Father Stirling looked rather surprised, but for some minutes made no reply. "A governess!" he repeated, at length, musingly· "what do you think you could teach?"

"I hardly know; I have never thought about it," replied Marion.

"Well, do so; and let me know for what, on consideration, you consider yourself qualified, and I will write to a priest that I know in London, and see if he can do anything for us."

"What shall I do with regard to mamma?"

"Write her just the affectionate letter your own heart will dictate, telling her how, if she will only alter her resolutions, you will devote yourself, heart and soul, to her, as you have always done. Tell her what it has cost you to give up Henry Lisle, and ask her not to increase the severity of this trial, by spurning you from her. Tell her, however, that you must remain a Catholic, but that, if she will only see you, you will give her such good reasons for the change you have made, that you are sure she will admit your sincerity, even though she herself may remain unconvinced. Tell her that her God *is* your God, and that for Him only, would you cause her the sorrow now wringing her heart. Say this, or something like this, and surely she will relent; at any rate, you will have done your part."

Marion shook her head. "She will never relent! O, mamma!"

"Come! come! this will never do!" said Father Stirling. "I must let you make your first communion, and then you will be stronger."

Marion smiled through her tears.

"Next Sunday week, I think, and meantime we must make a *novena* for you."

"What is that?"

"A nine days prayer to obtain an intention."

"And will you make one for me?"

"We will, that Almighty God may give you strength to bear your trials as a Catholic ought. Good-by, my child. Poor little thing," he murmured to himself, as he watched her down the garden path; "an angry mother and a broken love-dream are heavy trials for eighteen. But, no cross no crown. *Mater dolorosa, ora pro ea.*"

CHAPTER XVII.

MARION was right. The sweet letter that reached her mother in reply to her own, was unheeded, save by a brief note which accompanied a packet from Mr. Lisle, and informed her that she had already had her decision.

As for the clergyman's budget, it was something tremendous. A long tirade of abuse against everything Catholic, and of flimsy arguments against every doctrine of the Church. One after the other these melted away into thin air, or thinner imagination, beneath a few telling words from Father Stirling, as he and Marion conned them over on the afternoon of the Sunday of her first communion.

"So much for Protestantism, if they have nothing better to say than that," said Mr. Darrell, who had been listening attentively to the conversation.

"I suppose I shall have to answer these objections," observed Marion.

"I do not see any occasion for your doing so," replied Father Stirling; "though, perhaps, if you do not, Lisle will say that you have not looked into both sides of the question. But I should

imagine, the very fact of a person living till the age of eighteen in communion with a Church, ought to be a guarantee that she knows what its doctrines are, and what the grounds of its belief."

"She would be clever if she could determine what are the doctrines of the Church of England," observed Mr. Darrell, "among such a mass of contradiction. I was reading an article yesterday on the 'Broad Church,' which is just springing up into notoriety, heralded by its 'Essays and Reviews.'"

"The 'Broad Church'—what is that?" asked Mrs. Darrell.

"Something quite new; 'just out,' in fact, but already growing fashionable, and patronized, they tell me, by those who sit in high places. We shall have the narrow one next, I suppose."

"But who are they? What do they teach?"

"Why, nothing; that is, they seem to be doing all they can to pull Christianity to pieces altogether. Among other things, some of them take away the inspiration of Scripture, and others deny the eternity of hell, so I should think a good many sinners will become Broad-churchmen. It will be rather amusing, if not edifying, to watch the rival operations of the Broad Church and High Church. Where one party seems intent on pulling off every doctrine it can lay hold of, the other is equally busy in putting as much on as the institution will carry without growing restive; while the Low-churchman, in his turn, can do nothing but denounce each party alternately, at Exeter Hall and tea-meetings, in

common with Romanists and Mormons. Poor Church of England, what will it come to in the end? The poor fellow, of whom Æsop writes, whose old wife pulled out the brown hairs, while his young one worked away at the white, was nothing to it, nor the unfortunate caterpillar, in whose body the ichneumon fly has deposited her larvæ. I always felt a great deal of commiseration for these two victims of misfortune; but the Church of England will soon be more pitiable still. What can one do whose foes are those of his own household? Dissent! Disunion! Infidelity! Could we have a sadder picture of a house divided against itself?"

"Hear, hear!" cried Joe, from the other end of the room. "Who says my father ought not to be in Parliament. Wouldn't he 'confound their politics, and frustrate their knavish tricks,' with a vengeance!"

"Why, Joe, you have been so quiet," said Edith, "that I really did not know you were there."

"Rather impertinent, sister mine, any one would think I was habitually noisy, to hear you talk."

"Or to hear you shut a door, open a window, come down stairs, or—"

"Come, come, Edie, that will not do, I plead guilty: I was born to make a noise in the world, and Father Stirling says we must fulfil our vocation."

"Remarkably cool," exclaimed Father Stirling, "to make me the apology for his love of racket."

"Joe can be quiet sometimes, though," said Emily, looking proudly at him.

"Yes, when he is either hungry or sleepy," said his father.

"Or thoughtful," added Emily.

A smile passed over Joe's handsome face.

"Which have you been all the afternoon, Joe?" asked his father.

"I know," said Emily; "he has been thinking, poor boy, that this is his last Sunday but one with us."

"Nonsense!" cried Mr. Darrell, sitting upright in his chair. But Emily was right, in a fortnight more Joe must be once again upon the sea.

A very deep silence fell upon the little party, for all felt that much of the home sunshine would pass away, too.

"But this will never do," cried Mr. Darrell, at length; "suppose somebody sings us a song. Look at Marion, she is getting quite mopy."

"No, no!" exclaimed Marion, trying to withdraw from the tell-tale blaze that sprung up under Mr. Darrell's "magic touch," as Emily called it; but more than one saw a very big tear in the blue eye. Joe saw it, and a flash of pleasure shot through his heart. Poor boy, what had it to do with him?

A few nights after this, there was a little family party at the Seymours, and the young people from the Cedars walked home through the frosty air. They had spent a cheerful evening; but they did not feel quite as bright as usual, for Joe had but a few days longer to be with them, and Marion was wearing daily sadder and sadder beneath her heavy load. "She must have something to dis-

tract her, or she will sink," Father Stirling had that morning said to Mrs. Darrell.

The twins walked on in front, talking of Marion and Joe alternately, while the subjects of their thoughts lingered behind in deep and earnest conversation. Joe felt that to-night or never he must speak and learn his fate. He fenced about for a long time, he talked of the sea, of the people in the neighborhood, of the weather, of his sisters, of his dog, but from each and every topic the subject seemed equally unapproachable, and all the while they were nearing the Cedars, and his golden opportunity was gliding away.

"I shall hear of you sometimes through my sisters, Marion," he observed at last.

"Of course you will."

"I wish you would write me just a little letter sometimes, yourself?"

"There will be no need for me to do that. I can send you any message I wish through them."

"I do not like things second-hand," said Joe, half crossly.

"Well, we shall see."

"If it were not that it makes you unhappy," continued Joe, "I should be half glad that your mamma is angry with you, it will be so nice to have you always with us."

"You are mistaken, Joe," replied Marion; "I shall not stay much longer at Harleyford."

"Why? Where are you going?"

"To be a governess."

"Marion, what do you mean?"

"Only what I say, Joe; Father Stirling and your mother both know my intention, and approve of it."

"Mamma does! It was only a day or two ago, Marion, that she said our house should be your home until you returned to your own."

"You need not tell me of your mother's kindness," replied Marion; "but she agrees now with Father Stirling, that I must have some active employment to keep me from brooding over my troubles, which really seem more than I can bear."

"Poor, dear girl," said Joe, affectionately pressing the hand that lay upon his arm. "Marion, I shall often think of you when I am many miles from here."

"But you must not do so in sorrow, Joe," she replied; "Father Stirling says mine is a very mild case of persecution; where one suffers less than I do, twenty suffer more."

"I wish you would make up your mind to stay with my mother and the girls. Father Stirling would soon find active work for you in the parish; if not, there are plenty of little things to distract you. You should see how much they find to do at home, with the house and garden, and with their needlework for the church and for the poor. No one ever spends an idle minute at the Cedars, I can tell you, except, of course, at holiday times like these. I can promise you, you should have plenty to do. Ah! Marion, you are not straightforward with me, this is not your only reason for leaving us."

"Perhaps not, Joe; I think there is another, stronger still."

"Tell me what it is; remember what an old friend I am."

"It is, then," said Marion, "that over and above what I have just said, nothing could induce me to remain a burden on your family, as long as I have the means, by either my head or my hands, of gaining my own livelihood."

"Marion, this is pride, one of the deadly sins."

"Then it is proper pride."

"You had better not talk of such an article as that; Father Stirling would tell you there was no such thing in existence."

"Then, self-respect."

"Equally wrong. 'Now you are in Rome, Marion, you must do as Romans do.' The Church makes humility the very watch-word of perfection, and you must practice it by consenting to remain at the Cedars"

"I know very well, if it wanted nothing but loving hearts to detain me there, I should never leave the dear old house; but we need not talk of this now; you, at least, will not be pained at seeing me go forth to seek my fortune. I shall probably remain your mother's guest for some little time to come yet."

"And do you think my feeling about you is such a selfish one, that I only care not to witness your discomfort? How little you know me, Marion!"

There was a short pause, as both walked on in silence, broken only by the subdued voices of the girls in front.

"Do you mean to say," cried Joe, at length, "that you actually mean me to go back to sea, leaving you in this determination?"

"What else can I do?"

"Promise to remain with my mother."

"That I never will. O, Joe," she continued, "do not, I beg of you, make my weary path more difficult."

"More difficult, Marion! There is nothing I would not do to render it smooth. It is you who persist in walking over the stones, when the green sward lies ready for your feet."

"Simply because I know that duty leads me across those stones. Have you forgotten the story Father Stirling told us the other day of St. Jeanne de Chantal, who took her first step upon her path of duty across the body of her son?"

"She was a saint, Marion, one of those set up to be admired, but far beyond our imitation."

Marion smiled. "A convenient doctrine that, Joe, but I am afraid the line of demarcation must be sometimes rather hard to be determined between what we are to admire, and what to imitate."

"Marion," cried Joe, stopping short in his energy, "I have made one resolution; unless you promise this, I will not stir to join my ship."

"Joe, are you mad?"

"I think I am," replied her companion, excitedly. "Listen, Marion, if you had a claim upon our family, a real claim of relationship, would you scruple to form one of its circle?"

"Candidly, Joe, I do not think I should. It

would then be only a question of pride, now it is one of principle."

"Then let it be so no longer, but take your place among us as a sister and daughter."

"But I cannot, Joe; why go over the same ground again; how can I do this?"

"By promising to be my wife;" and poor Joe poured forth the whole secret of his love, with all the enthusiastic ardor of twenty-two.

Marion was perfectly overwhelmed with astonishment and regret. The passing thought that had stolen over her the night of the party, had been so completely lost amid graver scenes and subjects, that this declaration came upon her like a thunder clap.

"Joe," said Marion, as he paused for her reply, "you must believe me when I say, that of all the troubles I have had to bear, this is not the lightest. Had I liked you less, it would have been easier to grieve you, easier to inflict a blow, that I fear will be a severe one to you, for dear, dear Joe, I can never love you with more than a sister's love."

"Marion!" he exclaimed, in a voice so strange, she could hardly recognize it; "Marion!"

Neither spoke for some seconds, and now, having entered the gates, they began to ascend the drive.

"Could nothing, Marion," said Joe, at length, "could nothing, do you think, change your feeling for me? I will give up the sea and accept the appointment offered me the other day, if you shrink

from the harassment always experienced by a sailor's wife. I will be what you like, and do what you like, if you will only try to love me."

"Do not talk so, Joe, I beg and pray of you," cried the poor girl, bursting into tears, "or you will break my heart. If you only knew all, you would see how impossible it is."

"You are already engaged!" cried Joe, with a start.

"No, I am not; but mamma was not the only one I gave up to become a Catholic."

"I never thought of this, Marion," he said, very gently, after a long pause. "Tell me one thing; is it Henry Lisle?"

Marion bowed her head.

"You are right," he whispered, as they reached the hall door, which his sisters had already entered, "inactivity would be too much for you; as for me, a month more on shore would kill me. Go wherever you can be happiest, and may God Almighty bless you!"

Stooping down, he kissed her forehead, and before she could recover from her surprise, hurried up stairs to his own room, and the silent sorrow of his own heart.

Before many days the "old house at home" was very quiet, almost dull, for Joe Darrell had gone to sea again.

"He has felt the parting dreadfully this time. I never saw him so downcast in my life, as he has been the greater part of this week," said Mrs. Darrell.

"Poor, dear boy!" said Emily, to whose sympathies all had been confided by the young sailor.

More than a month rolled on after his departure, yet nothing was heard of, suitable to Marion Howard. More than once Mrs. Darrell tried to dissuade her from an idea so fraught with difficulty, but Mr. Seymour, whom she called in to attend her, for Marion's health was beginning to suffer, also counselled change of scene. But still Mrs. Darrell felt loath to part with her, and once again sought Father Stirling and his advice.

"Endeavor to place her in a good Catholic family, where she may find occupation for talents never yet called into play, but which I feel sure she possesses, and believe me, my dear friend, you will have done a greater kindness for Marion Howard, than in leaving her in a position where her high spirit would be constantly chafing under a sense of her dependence."

At length Marion thought of writing to her grandmother in London, intimating a desire of spending a short time with her, but leaving it to an interview to tell her of her determination to seek an engagement, and of the events that had rendered such a course of action necessary. Nor did the remembrance of the unkindly feeling entertained by Mrs. Howard for her aged relative deter her from the idea, for she felt justly that she had no cause to shrink from her father's parent, whom in her early years she had so deeply loved. There was another reason that had made Marion turn to old Mrs. Howard. She knew that

her mother's family would fully coincide in her decision with regard to her refractory child, and consider the line of conduct she had adopted as only wholesome severity, and she therefore felt that in her present circumstances this grandmother was the only relation to whom she could look for assistance. Nor was she mistaken. Return of post brought so warm a welcome from the old lady, that Marion grew almost buoyant again under its influence. Bitterly both had felt the estrangement, for old Mrs. Howard had never seen her grandchild since the moment she had left Ennington in anger with the mother. The old lady's residence in London was of later date than Marion's schooldays there, and though little periodical birthday messengers and New Year's gifts invariably reached the grandmother, they were but a sorry substitute for the privilege of clasping her little Marion to her heart. It was, therefore, with unfeigned joy that she hailed the prospect of welcoming her to her little home, secretly wondering within herself what could possibly have brought such an event to pass.

It was on a cold, foggy morning that Marion left the roof that had so hospitably sheltered her during her days of trials, and the party who had assembled to bid her good-by was at best a melancholy one. Edith, silent in her sorrow, Emily, the impulsive, sobbing as though her heart would break, while from Mrs. Darrell's soft eyes the tears fell thick and fast.

"Good-by, darling," she exclaimed; "God bless

you! You promise me one thing, remember. If you find anything hard to you, you will come back. Here is your home."

"I will, indeed," cried Marion, smiling through her tears. "This is only half going to seek out my fortune, while I have so many kind friends. Heroines, to be romantic, ought to be quite forsaken and alone."

"Ah, but you see, my dear, heroines went out of fashion with knight-errants and dragons. Good-by."

Marion took her seat by Robert, for Mr. Darrell was not well enough to drive her, as he had intended, to the station, which lay at some distance from Harleyford. As the dog-cart wheeled off, the tears flowed fast behind her gauze veil, and the slow walk down the steep path brought back so many happy rides and drives that little Golden-hair felt desolate indeed. At the Lodge another trial awaited her, where Turner and Eliza, animated by different feelings, were standing to bid her good-by. The former saw only the child she had nursed and fondled as her own, turned into a world of strangers by a mother whom Turner had never learned to love; while Eliza, with all the ardor of a new convert, saw only suffering for the cause of Christ. But though proud of the martyrdom, her woman's heart mourned over the martyr, and more than one tear fell on the left hand Marion extended to her, as with her right she grasped that of her old nurse.

"Good-by, nursey!" she exclaimed, kissing her,

and bending so low, that Robert trembled for her equilibrium. "Good-by. There, don't cry; all will be well. I am coming back to see you all at midsummer. You must pray for me, Eliza, for I shall indeed need prayers."

"That I will; indeed I will," cried Eliza; "but O, Miss Marion, things must right at last."

"Will you not bid me good-by, nursey?" asked Marion.

"I can't, I can't, deary. Why did I live to see you go away like this, my own sweet, precious child, you who never did anything to anger her. Ah, deary, but the missus has a hard, cold heart."

"Turner!" cried Marion, withdrawing her hand, "how can you—how dare you speak like that?"

"Well, this is the first time I ever said a word agin her; but surely, Miss Marion, it is enough to make one forget one's duty to one's betters, to see such a thing as this."

"But not to one's mother, Turner."

"God bless you, child; you are right," sobbed the old woman, "and I will never vex you with my foolish old tongue again. O, deary, deary me!" and she thought of the Christmas eve when she had watched Joe drive her up to the house, so full of life and spirits.

"Good-by," said Marion once again; and the carriage rolled off amid an hysterical sob from the old woman, that rang in Marion's ears for hours.

But a farewell visit had yet to be paid to Father Stirling, whose Mass was just ended. Marion sprang from the vehicle and entered the church,

where, after a prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, in which it seemed as though the very earnestness of a lifetime was concentred, she sought the priest in the sacristy. Father Stirling, who had heard the carriage stop, and seen her pass the window, was expecting her. He stepped forward to meet her, and held out his hand. "Going away?" he asked.

Marion bowed her head, for she could not trust herself to speak.

"Going away," he repeated, gently, "into the world as yet you have only heard and read of. But keep up a brave heart. You have kind friends in the background."

"I am not afraid," answered Marion; "but everything seems so dull, even the weather, and I have never travelled alone before."

"Nor will you now, my child; you will have two Companions—two who have travelled before."

Marion looked up inquiringly.

"Yes, and a darker, drearier road; for let the fog be ever so cheerless, it will never equal the gloom of the *Via Dolorosa*, along which a Son and His Mother travelled eighteen hundred years ago. They will be with you to-day. Will not their company suffice you?"

"Yes," said Marion.

"I have offered my Mass for you this morning."

She thanked him with her eyes.

"Will you pray for me?"

A sob was the only answer.

"God give you His grace, my poor child, to bear up bravely. Are you afraid your grandmother will refuse to receive you when you tell her all?"

"No, it is not that," said Marion, striving to recover her firmness; "but everything seems so uncertain. I feel as if I was stepping off firm land into a little boat."

"So you are, but you have a good Helmsman. You must write and tell me all your troubles. I have been thinking that you had better not write just yet to your brother, though, I suppose if you do not, Mrs. Howard will. You must be guided by circumstances. Here is a little book, to make you remember Father Stirling in your prayers;" and he placed a beautiful Missal in her hand.

She tried to thank him, but the effort was too great, and subsided into another sob.

"Hush! hush!" said the priest. "If everything I do to make you happy, makes you cry, I must begin to scold."

Marion smiled.

"Now, really, you are a woman, every inch of you!" exclaimed Father Stirling. "Crying when I pet you, and laughing when I am angry. I will have no more to do with you, so run away. You will be late for the train," he added, "if you stop another minute."

"Give me your blessing first," said Golden-hair, sinking on her knees.

He gave it, and in two minutes more she

and Robert were whirling on behind Black Prince, who as trotted fast as his four legs could carry him.

The country through which the panting engine bore Marion and her fortunes was not more varied than her thoughts.

There was the past, with Ennington and its associations, with her mother and their last railway ride together, and with Henry Lisle and those thousand thoughts of him, half memories, half dreams. Then came the present, with its heavy sorrows, but grand religious influence brooding over all, as the shadow of the crimson glass falls on the cathedral aisle, flecking alike the living and the dead. But, O, the future! How she strove in imagination to raise the jealous veil that shrouded it from her sight. Refractory children, haughty mothers, the dreaded, because untried, monotony of teaching. Like many other young persons, Marion had a horror of the discipline of the schoolroom, of the hard and inky forms, the torn books, dirty maps, and all those thousand uncomfortablenesses that seemed to make the sum and substance of school life, as she remembered it. Then this brought her back to those very early days at Ennington, to the pretty breakfast room, to the old piano, crayon-heads, the mother-governess, and the lesson interrupted by the knock that made her heart beat quicker even than as a child. Golden-hair looked at the vision till it became a living scene, and "mistaking memory for hope," it seemed as though it could not all be passed. All was so

vivid, the house, the garden, Turner, even Tyrza brought his memories and his tears. Roused from her reverie, she looked through the carriage window. "How like the future is a cloudy day," she thought, "when objects in the immediate vicinity are tolerably distinct, but a little further off a dense curtain veils everything from our eyes. Nor does the metaphor end even here, for in the recesses of the mist I could fancy spectres and dreadful forms, which, as we approach them, are only trees and houses. And what will these things be, that now stand out in the future, so black and mysterious, but common places? For what is a lifetime, after all, but a simple chain of events, a succession of days and nights!"

And now the fields, and trees, and cows, began to disappear, the fog grew thicker, and the houses more numerous. Uncomfortable looking places were passed by, the back windows of low tenements, tall gaunt warehouses, and dingy people. Dull looking thoroughfares were crossed on high railway bridges, to be succeeded by a cutting with a wall on either side, above the top of which arose houses again, while boys' heads, peeping over the parapet, cried "hurrah!" to the passing locomotive. Then came large desolate expanses, dotted with empty trucks, rusty iron, navvies, and snorting engines, that, like busybodies, seemed wondrously intent on doing nothing, unless it were making "day hideous" with their yells. And then came London—busy, bustling, never-quiet London, with its rolling wheels,

its ceaseless footfalls, its Babel of shouts, and calls, and cries; its rows of shops, and streets, and terraces, its thoughtful men and earnest women, its crimes and virtues, its palaces and alleys, its fearful poverty, and its wondrous wealth.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE winter afternoon was falling, and lights gleamed rapidly through the fog, and Marion grew tranquil as she felt herself one of the living moving mass. In a world where all have aims, should she have to live without one? No; she took the resolution, that, come what might, she would be happy, even though she built the foundation of that happiness upon the wreck of the loved and the lost. The train neared the terminus, in the midst of that long, strange, weird-like whistle, that, varying with a kind of wavering quail, always brings with it the joyful feeling of a journey ended, very comforting to one's bones, or the supposition of a collision, very discomforting to the same. The train stopped, as its mournful cadence died away in the fog, and two minutes later, Golden-hair was clasped in her grandmother's arms.

Mrs. Howard, senior, was not rich; the greater part of her income had passed with her only son, and a moderate annuity was the old lady's sole resource. But it was amply sufficient for her every want, and many a silent deed of charity besides, and in her quiet, old-fashioned home at

Islington she lived alone, a little quizzed, much loved, and very much respected.

Marion was soon installed in the little parlor, where her grandmother succeeded at last in placing her full length upon the sofa, beside a very cosy fire, while she bustled off to hurry in the tea. Very characteristic was the dear old lady's parlor. The mahogany chairs, covered in horsehair, and inlaid with brass, the piano to match, towering up to the ceiling, whose antiquity it sets one's very teeth on edge to compute, the round table in the middle and square one under the window, the crimson curtains bordered with black velvet, all were redolent of lang syne. A closer scrutiny revealed cases of stuffed birds, rare and oriental shells, fans, heathen gods, carved ivory, feather flowers, and various curiosities, all of which, gifts of many years ago from her son, embellished the apartment, with the old lady's work-box and tea-caddy, and an endless variety of paper roses.

But the family portraits were the glory of Mrs. Howard's heart. There was her husband, with very black hair, a coat-collar rising majestically above his head, and a most elaborate shirt frill, that must have cost the artist a world of trouble and white paint, not to speak of his eyes, which were so natural that they followed you into every hole and corner of the room; and there was herself, looking most benignly at a pink rose, glorious in a satin dress, lace cap, and a most wonderful array of jewelry. And there was Captain Howard, on one side of the piano as a baby, very fat and sulky,

and on the other as a boy, not much improved by years, and over the mantel-piece as a young man in full regimentals. As, however, in this case only one side of his face was visible, and that rather dark in complexion, it was difficult to say how he did look, or whether, in fact, he looked at all, his eyes being left completely out of the question. Then came portraits more antiquated still, portraits of a generation further off, of uncles, aunts, and bosom friends. Marion could not help wishing that the gentlemen would have combed up their hair before honoring the artist with a sitting, and came to the conclusion that it would have been an infinite improvement if the ladies' bodices had aspired higher, or condescended lower. But they all looked very solemn, all seemed intent on impressing the beholder with the fact that he was in the midst of a very respectable people.

It was not until Marion had eaten as much as she possibly could, to be grumbled at affectionately for not eating twice as much, that the old lady allowed her to begin upon the subject of her visit to London. Not that she was the unworthy daughter of her great progenitress, but she felt wonderfully curious to learn what could have induced Mrs. Howard, junior, to send her daughter to visit her uninvited. Marion told her story plainly and quietly. She spoke of the Darrells warmly; of her religion firmly; of Mr. Lisle she said little, but Mrs. Howard understood her with the intuition of parental love. With regard to her mother she simply stated the fact that she would not see her;

but there was that in Marion's manner when she spoke of her, such a perfect sympathy with her feelings, although grief at her decision, that the old lady dared not blame her to her child, although she was secretly boiling over.

"And you mean to say that your mother has disowned you, child?"

"She will not let me go home to her, grandmamma. Is it not a dreadful thing for me?"

Mrs. Howard dared not trust herself to reply. Both sat in silence, during which the little copper kettle on the hob sang merrily, as though it did its best to raise their spirits, while Marion said many a Hail Mary to its music.

"Thank God, I am living still!" said the old lady, at length.

Marion slipped from her chair, and, taking a stool, placed herself at her feet.

"And so you are a Catholic, Marion?" said her grandmother, reproachfully, but stroking her hair at the same time.

"Yes, grandmamma. Are you very sorry?"

"Yes, dear, I am very sorry," she replied, "because there are many things in that religion opposed to the Word of God. I think Catholics may be very sincere in their love of God and Christ crucified, but they mix up a great deal of nonsense with it, which I feel very sorry you should have learned to believe. But I think I shall be able to show you all of this. At any rate," she added, "let you believe what you may, you are still my own dear child, my poor, dear

Edward's little one. I have so longed to see you; indeed, I have just made up my mind that now you were a woman, and could act for yourself, and travel alone, I would invite you to come and visit me this very summer; and see, here you are, quite unexpected, but welcome as a swallow in spring."

Marion smiled, and the old lady continued.

"You look pale and thin; you have suffered a great deal, I can tell."

"Yes, I have, grandma; but things will be brighter now."

"But I am afraid, dear, you will be very dull here alone with me. I know no young ladies but Miss Tompkins and her sister, and they are quite different girls from you; besides, they must be a good deal older."

Miss Tompkins and her sister, Miss Jemima, were two highly respectable young ladies, very neat, very genteel, and very proper, but they *were* rather older than Marion.

"Grandmamma," said Marion, looking suddenly up, "I have only come to visit you for a little time. I mean to look out for a situation as governess," and Marion told her what Mr. Seymour had said. But it was a long time before the old lady, in whom dwelt all the pride of the Howards (as she phrased it), could be brought to listen to such a course.

"Well, never mind to-night," she said at length, after striving to persuade Marion to give up her intention, "there is ten o'clock striking, and if you will not have any supper I must put you to bed."

And having lighted her to her room, the old lady stayed with her, fondled her, folded up all her things, kissed her fifty times, cried over her, and never left till she had tucked her up with her own hands, bidding her say her prayers in bed, for that was not wrong at all when anybody was so tired. The instant, however, that grandmamma's last foot-fall had died away down stairs, Marion sprang out of bed, said her night-prayers, then laid herself down on the couch that had once been her father's, and slept soundly till the morning awoke her with its carts and cries.

Marion lay and watched the winter morning struggle in, and light up her quaint little room, with its old-fashioned chintz and dingy-looking furniture. Weary at last, however, of shaping the roses and tulips that adorned her curtains into all kinds of eccentricities, she arose and dressed herself. She had just finished her toilette and ended her prayers, when her grandmother slipped gently in to see whether her little visitor was awake. And now that Marion was arrayed in her natty morning dress, with the soft shining ringlets arrayed on each side of the bright speaking face, old Mrs. Howard must be pardoned if a momentary glow of parental pride passed through her heart, to be replaced by even a stronger feeling of indignation against the mother who could cast away so sweet a little flower. But, restraining herself to silence when comment must be reprobation, and reprobation wrong, she contented herself with kissing her fondly, and leading her down

to breakfast, where seated on either side, with the bright little copper kettle singing forth its very heart, they discussed their eggs and coffee, and many a past event and future plan besides. Before the meal was concluded, won over by Marion's reasoning, Mrs. Howard had consented to her seeking an engagement, provided she spent a week or two with her first, during which time anxiety of every kind was to be banished, for, added she, "I must see a little color in those cheeks before I let you go away from me again."

And so Golden-hair tried to banish intruding cares, and passed even three weeks with her grandmother in what the old lady considered very gay doings. For what with morning walks and calls in all imaginable parts of Islington, and evening tea-drinkings at home and abroad, it seemed to her a perfect whirl of dissipation. But she for whom all this gayety was planned and indulged, grew thinner and paler still, in spite of all, and notwithstanding her love for her kind relation, pined for the liveliness of the Cedars, and still more for the dear home-life at Ennington, with its thousand interests. Who can say how the gossips of those monotonous tea-parties wearied her young spirit, or how sick at heart she grew of the listlessness that could find no relief except in a little embroidery. Sometimes she had to play, but what piece or song in her little repertoire, was not mingled, as music only is, with almost an agony of associations? Old Mrs. Howard was all that could be desired in aged womanhood—but her friends!

On more than one state occasion, when the best china and the silver tea-pot figured upon the table, and Anne, in "best bib and tucker," handed around the fragrant hyson, and almost imaginary bread and butter, "Surely," thought Marion, "grandmamma must have a fancy for disagreeable looking people." And they were an unpromising selection, beginning at the two old ladies in the corner, who were discussing church and parish matters like veteran vestrymen, down to Miss Jemima in the white muslin. But when they were gone, and they generally went early (there being only one of Mrs. Howard's coterie who had masculine protection at hand), when they were gone, then Marion found her tongue. Then she laughed and made her grandmother laugh, till one would have wondered how two people could find so much merriment, where, half an hour before there had been nothing but state. So it never once struck Mrs. Howard that Marion was dull; she never for an instant imagined that the daily walk in Highbury had something of sameness in it, or that the conversation of her friends to-day was the same as yesterday and the day before, and would be, in all probability, the same to-morrow and the day after.

But this same conversation of Mrs. Howard's friends was destined to find fresh fuel. On the Monday morning after Marion's third Sunday in Islington, a certain Miss Snagg called on the Misses Tompkins, and after a few minutes' chat, during which time it remained poised on her

tongue, like the tit-bit on an epicure's fork, out came a most tremendous secret. No sooner had she departed than on went their bonnets, and down went the secret to Mrs. Smith, and up to Miss Brown, and then to the little woman at the post office, to the lending library and wool shop at the corner of the street, crossing and re-crossing the circle of Mrs. Howard's friends in Islington, like the flux and reflux of the sea. Then the storm burst. The Rev. Mr. Glumley called from Mrs. Smith, and the Rev. Mr. Singles from Miss Brown; the former groaning in spirit over the defection of the age, the latter simpering and sighing in the deepest sympathy. Both were entertained by grandmamma, both drank two or three glasses of port in consoling her, and both departed without seeing the object of their call and curiosity, who sat in her own room reading Thomas a Kempis. Then tracts enough to have lighted the fires at the Cedars for a week poured in from "sincere well-wishers," while such a "No Popery" cry was raised through Barnsbury, that one would have said the Pope was going to send over another cardinal, or found a double hierarchy in Great Britain.

At first grandmamma was amused, then vexed, then evidently tired of the question, which was fast making herself and her little home the butt of the slanderer. She loved Marion dearly, the child had tightly twined herself around her old heart; but she did not want to lose her friends, or still less her high prerogatives as general umpire and universal favorite. Marion soon saw that there was

but one way to restore affairs to their pristine calmness, and commenced in earnestness her proposed plan. She inserted advertisements, and answered them, "personally and by letter," rode miles crushed and stifled in omnibuses, and trudged many weary ones on foot. But to what purpose? To be told, after crossing London, that the "lady was suited;" to be questioned like a house-maid, and then dismissed to hear no more; to be buoyed up by a sweet lady face one day, who thought she might suit, and then receive the gentle note next morning, regretting "that she was too young." Then she applied to men agents, who shrugged their shoulders at the word Catholic; to women agents, who talked loudly, and told her that, as her qualifications were so few, she must be contented with a salary from which she knew Mrs. Darrell's cook would have turned away. Then she called on priests, who promised to do what they could, but who smiled sadly, and talked of twenty or thirty converts already on their lists, and who sent her to convents, where the nuns congratulated her, shook her two hands, kissed her two cheeks, longed to help her, but except with their prayers, could do no more.

At last a daily governess was advertised for in Islington itself, salary liberal, exactly Marion's qualifications required. The poor child put on her bonnet. Perhaps she might get this, which would at least prevent her being a burden on her grandmother, if it did nothing else.

The lady was a widow, rather stiff and business-

like, but kind in her manner, and was evidently struck by our little heroine's *tout ensemble*. She asked for references. Marion wrote Mrs. Darrell's address upon her card, saying, however, that except with regard to her position, it was, of course, valueless, as she had never taught in her life.

"I understand that," replied the lady; "but my children are young, and if you are naturally systematic, we shall manage very well. If the reference be satisfactory, as I feel sure it will, you shall hear from me, deciding the day on which we will commence."

Marion replied by one of her own bright smiles, and rose to take her leave.

"Pardon me," said the lady, "there is one thing I have forgotten to ask. I presume you are a member of the Church of England?"

"No, I am a Catholic," said Marion, firmly.

"A Catholic!" repeated the lady; "then excuse me, I will return your reference. A Catholic! That would not do at all. And you would have allowed me to engage you without mentioning this?"

"I did not think it would signify in daily tuition," repeated Marion.

"But it does signify very much," returned the other angrily. "How fortunate I should have asked you! I would not subject my little ones to Catholic influence for all I could see on earth. Of course I cannot expect you to see this, it is difficult to open the eyes of one born blind."

"Difficult, but no more impossible now with

God, than in the days gone by," answered Marion, "for I myself was a Protestant once."

"Then take my advice, young lady; go home and study your Bible, which will soon bring you back again. This you have not done much as yet, I am certain, for no girl who read her Bible ever became a Romanist."

Thoroughly Catholic as Marion Howard was, she had yet to learn detachment. The gift of Henry Lisle had been too dear to relinquish, and the little black book still lingered in her pocket, though, looking on it as a spurious version of the Word of God, its religious value had departed.

"There is something I should like to show you, if you will look at it," said Marion, quietly.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Gordon, recoiling, for what small specimen of Romish superstition might be coming, she did not know. "What is it?"

"Only a Protestant Bible."

"A Protestant Bible! You surely do not mean to say your priests let you carry that about with you?"

"I keep it for the sake of an old friend," replied Marion; "but what I want to show you is this. Take it in your hand, and tell me if it has been unread. Every mark is mine, made in my Protestant days, under texts that I loved best. Believe me, when I tell you, that that Bible has been deeply, earnestly, prayerfully read, and yet I am a Catholic!"

"Strange!" said the lady, as she turned over

page after page, black with pencil marks, "but, so much the worse. I consider you a real tool, the more so that I think you are intelligent."

"I wish I was," said Marion, smiling; "I should make all the better Catholic."

"Catholic!" repeated Mrs. Gordon; "Roman Catholic, you mean! We are Catholics."

"And yet," said Marion, smiling, "if a man asked you the way to the Catholic Church, you would not direct him to your own."

"Perhaps not, because even Protestants get into the silly habit of misapplying the term. But it is not the less a misapplication of all that."

"I shall not convince her if I contradict her," thought Marion, so she held her peace.

"You think I am very hard on you; do you not?" asked Mrs. Gordon, gradually unbending.

"Rather," said Marion.

"I have so much reason to believe so," replied the lady; "I once lost an old and valued friend by such a step as you have taken, for we have been strangers since."

"Was that her fault?" asked Marion, with rather a piercing look.

"No," said the lady, hesitating, "it was neither my friend's fault nor mine, exactly. My family feared this influence for me in the same way that I fear it now for my own children," she continued, listlessly turning over the leaves of the book; "and this very morning I have received a letter in which this Catholic religion figures very painfully. It is dreadful to see the havoc this evil is making in the

bosom of families. One hears of it, really, on every side now."

"Because the Catholic religion is spreading," replied Marion.

"But its day is over, nevertheless," rejoined the lady; "you know, the expiring lamp always gives a bright gleam before it dies."

"It flickers," returned Marion, "but does it not grow silently and surely brighter every moment? For my own part, I believe the trial of the Church, inflicted for the sins and irregularities of her children, is passing away, and my own deep conviction is, that England will be Catholic again. Not by any sudden convulsion, but that she will glide back into the bosom of the old faith, man by man renouncing error, till the truth shall gleam like one of our own altars, that has been silently lighted, taper by taper, till the whole shines forth in a flood of mingled light." The last sentence was lost in an exclamation from Mrs. Gordon.

All the time that Marion had been speaking, she had been turning over the leaves of the book, and now sat looking at the title page, transfixed with astonishment.

"My child, how came you by this book?"

Marion was too much surprised by the suddenness of the question, to attempt a reply.

"I ask you," continued Mrs. Gordon, in an agitated voice, pointing to the initials already mentioned, "because, O! because that is my handwriting! How, in the name of heaven, came it yours?"

Marion trembled like an aspen. In whose pres-

ence was she then? Mrs. Gordon! The truth flashed upon her in an instant, but she made a tremendous effort, and was calm.

"You wrote those initials?"

"I did, many years ago. Who gave the book to you?"

"Your brother, for I know now that I speak to the sister of Henry Lisle."

"And you!" asked Mrs. Gordon, grasping her arm.

"I am Marion Howard; have you heard of me?"

"You shall see," said Mrs. Gordon, rising as she spoke, and opening an escritoir. "Read that," she continued, putting a letter into Marion's hand. She did read it, read it to the very end, though it seemed as though her heart was wrung by the intensity with which she read it. It was a long and bitter letter, written by Henry Lisle, in the extremity of his grief, and ended with these words: "Perhaps of all living beings, you, Agnes, can best sympathize with me in my trouble, since the dark waters now surrounding me once flowed so deeply over your own soul. I know that he is with you now, only a memory of the past, and therefore, I may tell you of one drop of bitterness in my cup, not the least bitter, perhaps, of all. It is, that the author of this poor child's perversion is George Stirling! It is said that the sweetest wine makes the sharpest vinegar; and it is true, for it is hard to look from the dear friend of the past, to the plotting priest of the present, and to love him still. O Agnes! if I dare, how I should hate

him! I can only seek from Him who prayed for His murderers upon His cross, strength to conquer this feeling, strength to look still with brotherly love on the murderer of my life's happiness, if not of Marion Howard's soul, for the darkest shadow of all is, that we are perhaps separated for both time and eternity! I leave Ennington for my new parish to-morrow. 'Man proposes; God disposes.' What is it now to me, that the Rectory is all that I could desire? They wanted me to hasten down, that I might be consulted in the papering of my new home, but I wrote and told them to do what they liked, for that I was easy to please. I am so very wretched! You will tell me to pray for resignation; so I do, but I seem hard and wrong when I pray. Howard is unaltered—the same as ever, but there is a kind of shadow over her, that one feels, rather than sees. She has a proud, high spirit; but she is not warm-hearted, and though I admire her for qualities I know her to possess, were she not Marion's mother, there would be but little sympathy between us. Even now I sometimes fear the ruling feeling with her is offended pride, for she has never once spoken of this sad affair to me in a spiritual light. But I may mistake her, she is so thoroughly undemonstrative. I tremble for Marion; so young a creature, wandering alone through the great world! But what is to be done? She has cast us off; we have not rejected her. I will write again, from Sandiham. Good-by."

Marion did not raise her eyes from the letter,

even when she finished reading it, but sat looking abstractly at the words, even while she no longer read them. They had given her both pain and pleasure. Pleasure that she was still so deeply loved, pain in the depth of her separation from him; pleasure that her mother bore up bravely, but pain in the creeping shadow, in the isolation she so well understood of that cold, proud heart.

Mrs. Gordon looked fixedly at her, as though striving to read her very soul.

"This has been a strange meeting," she remarked, at length.

Marion's only reply was a burst of tears. In an instant Mrs. Gordon's arms were around her neck.

"Marion! little sister," she exclaimed, "look up! A Catholic governess for my children was one thing, the object of my brother's love another. He may spurn you with that same rash prejudice that once embittered my own life, but Agnes Gordon never will. I can see as clearly as any one, the errors of the faith you have embraced, but at the same time I see also the still deeper one of striving to force you into truth. If my mother had been living to have counselled a different treatment with poor George, things might have been very different. I have no doubt a little leniency would have led him back to re-examine for himself the doctrines of our purer faith, and would have saved us years of sorrow and heart-burning, and him a lifetime of error."

Marion did not answer, but clung to her new friend.

It was late that evening before she returned to Mrs. Howard's, and later still before she and the old lady retired to rest, for she had a strange tale to tell. A tale of how she had found the sister of Henry Lisle in the pale, quiet widow, and how that sister had received her with open arms, and had sympathized with her in deep grief, though she could not enter into her deeper enthusiasm. And then she spoke of the bright and beautiful children, and how the spirit of the father still seemed to cling around the home, so recently bereaved. For though he had not been her first and girlish dream, Agnes Gordon had loved her husband with a wife's truest devotion, and mourned for him as those only mourn, who, were it not for the father in heaven, and children on earth, would sink beneath their load. Since her bereavement, her life had been very lonely; friends she had few, for those she loved were far away, and the quiet reserved Scotch woman cared not to make acquaintances in her adopted home. And yet she clung to London, and the old house in Islington, that had been the scene of her married life, every room of which was so endeared by the shadows of the past. She loved to sit alone in the winter evenings, before the lights came in, and imagine another chair not vacant, and to fancy a voice now hushed in death still floating around her. And the narrow garden where he had loved to work, the room where he had kept his things, the corner where he had sat, the bed whereon he had died, and from which the sweet white face looked up so

peacefully to heaven, these were to Agnes Gordon the sunniest spots on earth. And yet even amid the relics of such a devotion as this, the widow clung instinctively to Marion, not only for Henry's sake, but because she suffered now, what she herself had suffered once.

Old Mrs. Howard opened her eyes at the recital, and might have failed to realize it, had not Mrs. Gordon made her appearance the next morning to ask her to spare her little visitor, to spend a few days with her. The old lady consented, sorry to lose her pet, but not loath to give the chatter of her friends a chance of subsiding.

"Mrs. Gordon, please do not send that letter!" cried Marion, as she finished reading one, just placed in her hand; "really, really, it is too severe."

"Too severe, Marion! I cannot see it."

"But it is indeed; what could a Catholic girl be to him now, a Protestant clergyman, and what claim have I on his forbearance?"

"The claim of Christian charity, the claim of old friendship, the claim of a girl whose affection he has won. I do not say more, for I know that more is impossible; but what right has he to be angry with you? and why, worse than all, should he excite your own mother against you, when you have only done what you believe to be your duty? Marion, it was Henry's counsel to my father that helped to blight so many years of my own youth, and that drove a bright and genial spirit into gloom and isolation. For that I have forgiven him, for

he was young and impetuous then, but now he is older, and ought to have grown wiser with his years. Yes, let the letter go; I want him to see though I pity his sorrow, I do not endorse his conduct. I should like to tell him how we met, and that even now a certain little lady sits in my own parlor facing me; but you think it would make your mamma more uneasy if she heard that you had left Mrs. Darrell."

"I am sure it would," replied Marion. "She looks upon me, I know, as comparatively safe at the Cedars. As for the letter, I wish it was a little less severe," continued the little pleader.

"Not a whit, my love! It is not often I get angry, but anything like intolerance rouses me at once. My poor dear husband helped to disperse many of the ideas Henry had instilled into me. But if I am liberal, I am not blind, and if there be one thing for which I have an especial distaste, it is the Catholic religion."

"Perhaps you do not understand it," suggested Marion.

"Yes I do, very well; I have heard the subject so often handled and re-handled."

"By Catholics or Protestants?" asked her visitor.

"By Protestants, for it is a strange thing, perhaps, but I never remember having a Catholic acquaintance in my life."

"Did you ever go to one of our churches?"

"Never."

"Will you come with me some evening?"

"You little Jesuit!" cried Mrs. Gordon, laughing, "what would poor Harry think the world was coming to, if he ever saw you sitting there, with your wicked blue eyes, making me such a cool request as that? Well, we will see."

Mrs. Gordon did see, and the result was, that she went to Benediction with Marion the next Sunday evening.

"What did you think of the services?" asked Golden-hair, of her companion, who had been walking by her side for some time in profound silence.

"This; that unless I wished my children to become Catholics, I would never suffer them to enter a Catholic church. I never saw anything so beautiful!"

You are right, Mrs. Gordon. But it was not this beauty that bowed into obedience the great mind and high spirit of George Stirling, nor that conquered the home-love in Marion Howard's heart! Look again, there is something more than this.

CHAPTER XIX.

IT was a boisterous day at sea, and the packet-boat running from Newhaven to Dieppe danced on the waves, till every glass in the steward's cabin jingled. The English shores had not faded, but already a most forlorn and miserable party were lying prostrate in the ladies' cabin, and most wretched, when all were miserable, was little Golden-hair. "Even the stewardess is ill," whispered a strong-minded passenger, as she arranged an incapable friend in her birth. "Dear me, how ill you look! Why, I am never sea-sick;" and she once more returned to her seat on deck.

"*Eau saucree!*" cried a French belle, and the poor pale stewardess compounded the abominable beverage. "A little brandy!" cried an English one; and once again the unfortunate attendant stumbled about the cabin.

"O dear! O dear! what shall I do?" sobbed a poor little girl. "Mamma, do come to me; I cannot bear it any longer!"

"But you must, my dear, and you must not disturb the ladies. You will be better soon," expostulated the stewardess.

Mamma was on deck, and nurse unable to lift

her head, so the poor child fell back again on her pillow with a groan of despair. Again there was silence in the cabin, if it could be called such, amid the blustering of the wind, the rattle of the engines, and the clatter of plates and dishes from without. O, those people! how could they eat? Yet eat they did, and that with as much nonchalance as though they had been in their dining-rooms at home. And so the hours dragged on, only enlivened by the arrival of some fresh sufferer from above, amongst them the hardy lady, who would have been ashamed of her weakness, had she not been too ill even to blush.

But all things have an end, even sea-sickness; and by the time Marion had dressed herself, and the packet had touched at the landing-place, she almost wondered what had become of the suffering that had bowed her so helplessly during the last few hours. It was not long before she was in the train, whirling through picturesque Normandy, still sad, however, in its winter barrenness, and growing every moment less and less distinct in the early March twilight. But Marion, as she passed along, saw many a village, dotted among the hardy budding trees, nestling around the patriarchal tower, that rose like the presiding genius of each little hamlet. Uncouth specimens of architecture were they all to Marion, but though she thought of England's far brighter villages, how cold the comparison seemed! What was the English hamlet, with its elegant manor-house and parsonage, its cottages, ornes, and stately spire,

to these little villages with their moss-grown churches? What the shadow is to the substance, the dream is to the reality; for Marion knew that beneath each tower and steeple that she passed, the Lord God Omnipotent was reigning in the Sacrament of His love. She was in a Catholic country! The idea was almost too exquisite to be realized. Every man, woman, and child she saw, thought as she did, prayed as she did, loved as she did!

Then she leaned back in the carriage, and thought and dreamed as she had done from Harleyford to London, but even since then the kaleidoscope of life had shifted for her, and though she had a friend the more, she had many a hope the less. Her London confessor had found her the engagement, that she was now on her road to Paris, to undertake, and though notwithstanding her horror of Catholic governesses, Mrs. Gordon would willingly have kept Marion with her, she saw plainly that it was the young girl's duty to fit herself for the future. She, however, insisted on sharing with Mrs. Howard the expenses of the journey and outfit, and it only remained for the poor little Golden-hair to pack her new dresses, sob her thanks to each loved donor, and take her departure for her dreaded sojourn in the land of strangers.

It was so late when the train reached the Gare St. Lazare, that Marion determined to stop at a hotel with a lady who had been her fellow-traveller during the journey, and not proceed to the

establishment of Mme. Le Brun until morning. After a tussle with certain men in blue, who insisted on an extra coin, of the value of which Marion was profoundly ignorant, the ride through Paris commenced. Except, however, a constant variation of long streets now bright with gas, now deep in shadow, now loud with the hum of voices, now silent in midnight stillness, Marion could distinguish little.

"The Louvre"—"the Tuileries," said her companion.

A vast building surrounded by a gilded rail, was our heroine's impression of the palace of kings, but he thought of Louis the Sixteenth and the howling revolutionists, and trembled to find herself in Paris.

"The Seine," said the lady, as they crossed a bridge. Marion looked at the silent waters in which the lamps and stars were reflected, and wondered how much was true of the story of St. Bartholomew's Day. But they soon stopped at the hotel selected by her companion, and before long, Marion was lying in the neatest of French beds, dreaming of Ennington and the Cedars all in one. She was only just dressed the following morning, when her companion knocked at her door.

"I have been thinking," said the lady, after the morning's salutation, "that it is time we knew each other's name."

"Certainly," said Marion, presenting her with a card.

"I do not happen to have my card-case with me," returned the other, "but I am Miss Hobart Jones, —— Place, Belgravia." The manner with which the name and address were given was so pompous, that Marion was obliged to bow very low to hide the smile, which her sense of the ludicrous brought to her lips. "As I informed you last night," continued Miss Jones, "one of my trunks, which I did not register, is lost, and I must return to the Gare to look for it. If you are not in a hurry to arrive at your destination, perhaps you will accompany me."

"I shall be very happy to do so," said Marion.

"We will breakfast then, first, at the table d'hote; but I suppose, as it is Sunday, you will want to go to church."

"Indeed I shall," replied Marion; "shall not you?"

"As for that, it will be a matter of half an hour for me," replied Miss Jones. "We will go to the Place du Havre first, and see about my box, then I will take you to the Protestant Church in the Rue d'Aguessau, and I will just catch the Messe de Midi for myself at the Madeleine, for you must know that I am a Catholic."

"So am I," said Marion.

"Capital!" exclaimed her companion; "then we will get Mass over first, directly after breakfast, and then we shall be free to do as we like."

Get Mass over! One would have imagined she was going to have a tooth drawn. Marion thought of Father Stirling and the little chapel at Harleyford, and sighed.

They breakfasted and set off to the Madeleine. Here, however, Marion was disappointed, for hers was a nature that associated pillar and arch, and "dim religious gloom" with church architecture; but following her guide, who stepped on before with the air of one accustomed to the place, she entered a row of seats. But here a difficulty presented itself; for how could she possibly hear Mass seated on her chair, and yet how kneel in the limited space allotted her? She looked at her companion, who, however, solved the problem by tipping up the chair before her, and accommodating herself on the rail. Marion tried to imitate her, but O, the misery of that first Mass in Paris, as she knelt, trying to steady the chair with one hand and hold her book with the other.

It would be difficult to say through what streets her companion did not drag Marion, or what lions she did not show her. And yet, by the afternoon, except a glimmering idea of streets with many people, but comparatively few vehicles, of open shops that wrung her heart for Catholic Paris, but into which Miss Jones peeped with the utmost unconcern, of large churches with shifting congregations, of houses looking very woodeny and unsubstantial, of women wearing caps instead of bonnets, and many men in blue, Marion had but a very faint idea of Paris.

"You will like Paris," observed Miss Hobart Jones, as they stood in the Place de la Concorde, looking up the Champs Elysees, at the Arc de Triomphe, "do you not think so?"

"I cannot tell yet," said Marion; "it seems very gay. Is it always like this?"

"Yes, always, only a great deal gayer. Do you not think you will be very happy?"

"Not unless the place I am going to is quieter," said Marion, and she mentioned a quarter at which Miss Jones turned up her nose.

"You never mean to say you are going there? *Quelle vie!* Why it is the dullest quarter in all Paris. Nothing but schools and convents."

"That is just what I like. I am a country girl, and am accustomed to a quiet life."

"Well, *chacun a son gout!*" exclaimed her companion; "as for me, I cannot understand such things. I like life, gayety, bustle! Quite time enough to sit and mope when you are too old to do anything better. I think while we are young we have a right to think more of pleasure than anything else; I do, indeed," she continued energetically, as though somebody were contradicting. "For one thing," she continued, drawing herself up, "the circle in which I move is very high, my friends in Paris being chiefly among its aristocracy. I am only over here now by the especial invitation of the Comtesse de Pierrepoint. She is a charming creature, an old bosom friend of mine, and has promised to let me do just as I like. I am an invalid just at present, and am to be quiet, therefore she has promised mamma not to take me out to more than two dinner parties a week."

Marion glanced at Miss Hobart Jones, and thought it was almost time for her to be out of

mamma's jurisdiction. She also thought of the steam-rate at which they had been traversing Paris, and wondered how fast Miss Jones walked when she was well. The idea, too, struck her rather forcibly, that the bosom friend of the Comptesse de Pierrepoint might have stopped short a few stairs lower the previous evening. It was all very well for Marion Howard, the little governess, to mount to the *cinquieme*, but for Miss Hobart Jones, —— Place, Belgravia—moving in the most exalted circles in Paris—it was rather too much! Marion knew very little of the world, but she knew better than this, and was naughty enough to wish that her new acquaintance was anything but a Catholic. Silly little thing! She had yet to learn that though the sunbeam may thaw the icicle, the icicle, with all its frigidity, has no power to lessen the life-giving warmth of the sun; but it was hard, in the burst of her first fervor, to understand a tepid or indifferent Catholic.

Marion was not sorry to bid Miss Hobart Jones good-by, and find herself on the road to the establishment of Madame le Brun. The bell rang, the gate opened, the luggage was deposited in the court, but it was not till Marion had paid her coachman, and heard the *voiture* lumber back over the ill-paved streets, and the great gate close with a bang, that she felt she was really alone in a foreign country, and in a house of strangers.

Never, perhaps, had Marion met a form of more quiet dignity, than that of the mistress of the house, who now advanced to meet her. She was

simply but elegantly dressed, in the black so loved by Frenchwomen, and her pretty lace cap, with its delicate ribbons, was arranged over her large curls, with the studied carelessness a Francaise only understands. But notwithstanding her gentle manner and soft words, the softer, perhaps, that they were spoken in musical broken English, and notwithstanding a smile that shone in every feature, Marion did not like her. There was a hard coldness in the light gray eye, that somehow reminded her of a snowy peak rising amid the sunshine of a tropical land. She received Marion kindly, though certainly a great part of the warmth of her manner subsided, when she found the newly arrived was simply *la maitr sse Anglaise.*

After a few inquiries concerning her voyage, madame, summoning one of the elder girls, deputed her to lead mademoiselle to her room. The child complied, and showed her a small chamber, to which her boxes had been already conveyed, and then, retiring, left her to herself. Marion looked around. It was a square room, paved with red tiles, and containing a little bed, three chairs of different patterns, a chest of drawers, and a washstand. Muslin blinds shaded the windows in the French fashion, and Marion saw that her prospect was the single street of ——, not uninteresting to her, with its inhabitants in Sunday costume, grouped around its doors and on the narrow pathway. Glancing again around her little room, she was not altogether displeased with it, comfortless as it was. She had half dreaded something worse,

and, determining to be brave, she followed her little guide, who soon reappeared, with a light foot. The child chattered as she went, but though Marion possessed sufficient knowledge of French to understand, she had not confidence enough to attempt a reply, so, satisfied with nods and signs in return for her communications, the little prattler led Marion from *dortoir* to *lavabo*, from the *lingerie* to the garden, and finally landed her in the saloon, with *la petite maman*, as madame was styled by her establishment. The room was thoroughly French, and to Marion thoroughly uncomfortable looking, and as she glanced at the bare floor and hard chairs, with the little round green mat in front of each, she felt very strange.

"You will dine with me, as it is the first day," said madame, condescendingly.

Marion bowed, but never felt so much inclined to go without her dinner.

Madame talked and tried to make herself agreeable, but Marion seemed frightened, dull, and—must we confess it?—proud; and she grew tired of the attempt, and proposed that Eugenie should conduct mademoiselle to the garden.

Sunday being *jour de reception*, many of the children's parents were walking about the garden, which was large and in tolerable order, and Eugenie, seeing her companion's wish to avoid them, turned into a little thicket of trees.

"*La chapelle de la Sainte Vierge*," she remarked, as they paused before a little building. It had once been pretty, but it was very dirty, and fast

falling into decay. Marion thought of the chapel at the Cedars, and felt sadder than ever. But she entered, and, to the surprise of Eugenie, who imagined that every English girl must be a Protestant, knelt down before the altar, though it must be owned that the broken vases and dingy roses gave her many distractions.

At this moment the elder girls returned from Vespers, and Eugenie, leading her into the recreation ground, where all were assembled, introduced the *Maitresse Anglaise* to both pupils and teachers. It was a hard task to be looked at and questioned, without a word to give in reply; to be in the position of a teacher, and yet to feel as bashful as a new pupil, amid the ebb and flow of the strange language around. They, however, meant to be kind, and did their best, though it was a real relief to Marion when the summons to dinner arrived. But she soon found that she had only exchanged one discomfort for another, for what with the strange people, strange dishes, and strange tongue, Marion had never felt so weary as during the two hours that Madame Le Brun and her friends remained at table. But the dinner came to an end at last, and by nine o'clock Marion had sobbed herself to sleep in her little red-tiled room.

It would be impossible to describe the utter loneliness of Marion's life in the French school. The time occupied in giving her lessons, weary as they were to her from the frivolity of her pupils, hung perhaps the least heavily on her hands. In the evening, her only place of refuge was either

her cold, comfortless little room, the dirty, noisy classes, reiterating with cries of "*Taisez vous donc bavardes!*" and "*Voulez vous vous taire mesdemoiselles?*" or else the even noisier *lingerie*, with the *lingeres* and sewing women for her companions. Of this miserable selection the latter was Marion's choice by day, though all three were tried by turns. And what a choice it was! Nothing but litter and uproar, with the younger children, to whom it formed a kind of nursery, constantly trotting in and out. But at night it was different; for then it was that a circle was formed around the table near the heated *poele*, with the shaded lamp in the middle, all busy with their needle-work. Why, then, did Marion, just coming up from that cold *salle de piano*, where she passed the earlier part of her evenings practising, why did she turn away from the merry party, and run up stairs to her room, where, wrapped in her winter mantle, she sat sobbing, in spite of the morning resolution to be brave? Marion Howard could bear the noisy children, she had learned, after a struggle never known on earth, to take her meals in a refectory, the description of which would not be believed by unsophisticated ears; she could tolerate the hundred other inconveniences of a second rate or third rate French *pensionnant*, but she could not bear the conversation of this hour of license, although the party only consisted of the disengaged *sous-maitresses*, and the prim-looking little *lingeres*.

"*Qu' est ce qu' il-ya de mal?*" asked the mistress of the second class. Poor little soul! she cannot

see that the conversation is wanting in womanly reticence; and so, while Marion sits up stairs, preferring the cold bedroom and the loneliness of her own pure little heart to the warm *lingerie*, with its busy tongues, mademoiselle continues her tale, amid such peals of laughter, that even *la petite Maman* herself is at length aroused by the *tapage*. Poor *sous-maitresses!* Surely, when God shall make up His jewels, they who in this life of unparalleled slavery shall have kept their faith, their hope, their charity intact, and their hearts unspotted from the world, shall shine lustrously indeed.

CHAPTER XX.

IT was a dreary afternoon in the beginning of October. The leaves were fluttering down fast from the trees, and the chrysanthemums fell heavily and untidily across the paths, beaten down by the autumn rains. It was the last week of the long holidays, which had seemed doubly long to Marion, passed, as they had been, in the dingy classes. Had she been alone, she would have felt her solitude less, but about a dozen of the most unruly children had been left behind, under the melancholy guard of the *sous-maitresses*, who were expected to return to what was truly for them a house of bondage, for alternate fortnights, during their holidays. Miserable companions were they, each and all, as, groaning for the hour of their emancipation, they occupied themselves meanwhile in reading romances and scolding their awkward squad.

Hardly a glimpse of the great city had Marion had, beyond the race over it with Miss Hobart Jones; for though she had been unoccupied during the whole two months of her holidays, she had not dared to venture forth alone. Utterly weary, therefore, of doing nothing, for the simple reason that

there was nothing to be done, the poor girl looked forward with positive pleasure to the recommencement of her humdrum occupation, for anything would be better than idleness, so she quite longed for the moment when the classes should be again reëchoing with their usual hum. Already *la petite Maman*, all the fresher from the *Bains de Mer*, was looking into everything and everywhere, while the *lingeres*, in renovated dresses, were working faster than ever, as they told stories of their holidays by the dozen. Marion had grown so tired of the uproar in the class, that she had stolen away to the music-room, and seated herself at the piano, but she could not play. Every chord she struck seemed mournfully akin to the dreariness of the dirty room, with its three shabby pianos, and the faint smell of dead leaves, creeping up through the open window. She arose, and, descending to the garden, strolled along the wet paths towards the little chapel, that looked more dingy and neglected than ever, with its muddy footprints and rain-splashed windows. But Marion knelt and took out her rosary, for dust and dirt had lost their disturbing influence since her residence in the *Pensionnat* of Madame Le Brun.

"Ma'amselle," said a voice, behind her, and a letter was placed in her hand. It was well she received it as she knelt, well that she read it there, well that the servant walked away without observing the sudden paleness of her cheek, as her eyes caught the black border of the envelope. Marion opened it; old Mrs. Howard was no more!

The letter fell from the young girl's hand, but for many minutes she neither moved her position, nor uttered a word in her sudden sorrow, almost too sudden and too great to be realized, but tears came at length to her relief.

"Grandmamma! grandmamma!" she exclaimed, passionately; "my only friend! I have nobody left me now!" but, as she spoke, her eyes fell on the meek white face above the altar, and the hand presenting the little Child to the sorrowing world, and she felt that the words uttered in her first great grief were false.

The intelligence contained in Mrs. Gordon's letter to her young friend, was only too true. Old Mrs. Howard had passed suddenly away the previous Sunday on returning from church, so suddenly that she could not even leave one parting word for the child she loved so well. Nor was this trouble, heavy as it was, the only one our little heroine now found herself called upon to endure. For a long time Mrs. Gordon's letters had spoken of her declining health, and Mrs. Howard's death had occurred just as she was on the point of sailing with her family for the Bermudas. It was a hard trial for the widow to leave the home of her married life, but her physicians told her that it was the only chance of saving a life so precious to her little one, and she left without a murmur.

"Would that I could stay to comfort you, my darling," she wrote to Marion; "but the London fog, rising as I write, warns me that I have already

lingered too long. I have every hope that the gentle climate, to which I am hastening, will renovate my health, and that in a year or two we may meet again. Meanwhile, with many prayers, I can only commend you to God, and your kind friends at Harleyford. Over and above the business of our removal, a most important subject has been occupying my attention for some time past; in my next letter I hope to be able to tell you more of this, but at present, I must say farewell."

Marion walked to her little room, where she remained all the evening, the laughter from the *lingerie* below, jarring painfully upon her overwrought nerves. She wrote to Father Stirling, telling him of her bereavement, wrote to him in that strain of wavering hope, that the Catholic must employ, who sees beloved ones pass away in error, but in good faith. So engrossed was Marion in the one idea of her grandmother's sudden death, that it was not till she lay sleeplessly tossing on her little bed, that the concluding paragraph of Mrs. Gordon's letter stole into her mind, and she began to wonder what her subject of consideration could be. "I wonder if she is contemplating a second marriage," thought Marion. "I hope not, but I do not see anything else that she would not have spoken of outright."

Hardly a week after the receipt of Mrs. Gordon's letter, Madame Le Brun summoned Marion to her private room, and informed her that having lost several pupils unexpectedly, she desired that the next month should bring their engagement

to a close. Marion bowed and walked calmly from the majestic presence, but in her own little room the brave heart at last gave way. All that she had borne there availed nothing, for she was even now but an indifferent French scholar. How could she return to England? What could she do, still so unqualified as a governess? Looking steadily forward to this end, she had worked incessantly at her French, and had associated with those from whose society she shrunk, and now, must the work remain unfinished?

Suddenly Marion remembered an Englishwoman who had called on Madame Le Brun, and to whom that lady had introduced her as a compatriot. Miss Tubbler had informed her that she contemplated resigning her lessons in the autumn, and should be glad to dispose of her pupils. To her, therefore, our little heroine now applied, though with sundry misgivings, for Miss Tubbler's appearance was by no means prepossessing.

It would be a long, dry story to tell of Miss Tubbler's promises and their shortcomings; of the handsome salary in perspective, which degenerated into little more than the quarter of the sum, out of which Marion had to pay Madame good terms for remaining "*pensionnaire libre.*" Nor will we tell of the lessons in miserable *pensionnats*, nor of children from whom Golden-hair fairly shrunk, all used as she was to the pupils of Madame Le Brun. Nor was this all we leave undescribed, for we could also tell of harassing journeys to give these lessons, which were scattered over the length

and breadth of Paris, from Belleville to Montrouge, from Vincennes to Vaugirard; of the bitter mornings when the snow lay thick, and Marion had to rise and trim her lamp in the still heavy darkness, and then, half breakfasting, to find her way through fog or frost to the first omnibus and its crowded freight; of the teaching all day after her flimsy morning meal, and the return in the evening, often wet, faint, and sick at heart, to the half-cold dinner in the refectory, amongst the uncleared plates and dishes of eighty pupils. And for this Miss Tubbler asked the fourth part of the first years' earnings; and so Marion plodded on by day, and lay awake at night, wondering whether, with all her slavery, she was making enough to pay both Miss Tubbler and Madame Le Brun. The lessons dropped away by degrees, and the items fell below the mark. What should she do? The thought of debt, with Madame Le Brun's frigid politeness before her, and Miss Tubbler's dragon eyes, was something fearful. Summoning courage, she wrote to Miss Tubbler, telling her how the lessons had fallen off from their original value, and begging a little grace. "Pay me what thou owest," was the reply, mingled with reflections so impertinent that Golden-hair's spirit was roused, and she sent her the hard-earned francs, with a letter worthy of a Caractacus.

Should she now speak to Madame Le Brun, asking her in her turn to wait, or write to her mother? She resolved to try the latter, and commenced, but her courage failed her.

"What will be the end of it?" cried the poor child. "Shall I write to Mrs. Darrell?"

"No," said pride; and Marion thought no more of that.

"To Father Stirling?"

"His spare money must be for charity," said principle, and she shook her head.

"Lie down and die!" said passion; and, in a paroxysm, Marion tore Miss Tubbler's last letter to pieces.

Again it was the day before Christmas eve, and Marion was looking out into the dirty street from the window of her bed-room. She had just come in from a long wet tumbling ride across the rough pavements of Paris, and her wet boots and mud-stained dress were lying beside her. She had not yet spoken to Madame Le Brun, or written to England; her lessons were even fewer, and her employers more exacting than ever. Instead of going down to her dinner, she stood still in the half-dark room, thinking of Ennington and Harley-ford, and of that very day twelve months ago, when she received her mother's last kiss, before that happy ride with Joe to the Cedars. All were remembered, and Marion wondered what she would not give, except her religion, to be folded in that mother's arms again. And then she looked sadly forward to the Christmas day, amongst the unruly few who were to be left behind, and thought of dear old England, with its John Bull Christmas, its holly and mistletoe, roast beef and plum-pudding. Of the joyous gathering of friends,

the songs, the dances, and romp of little children, for, childlike in her simplicity, Golden-hair clung to these simple pleasures still. She loved Christmas—loved it for God's sake, for home's sake, for England's sake. And as the glowing fire and beaming taper only make the winter night more dreary to the traveller without, so those memories of the past made the present more desolate still and little Marion thought of England till her life seemed too hard to be endured.

"*On vous demande, Ma'amselle!*" said a voice at the door.

"Who? I?" cried Marion, starting; "a visitor for me? Impossible! There must be some mistake." But she was very quick, nevertheless, in arranging her dress, and having washed her face to hide the traces of her tears, she descended to the *grand salle.*

A small flickering lamp was burning on the centre-table, but it yielded sufficient light to enable Marion to see that her visitor was a gentleman, and a stranger. He was apparently a military man, about thirty years of age, intelligent and thoughtful looking, though, perhaps, hardly to be called handsome. He advanced to meet her as she entered, but still more assured than ever that there was a mistake, Marion drew back.

"Miss Howard?" asked the stranger, inquiringly, and she felt that he was scrutinizing her in the uncertain light.

Marion bowed in great astonishment. Who could he be? What could he want with her?

The stranger advanced and took her hand, looking very strangely into her eyes. Marion tried to withdraw herself, but in vain, for an arm was already around her waist.

"Golden-hair," said the stranger, softly, "are you afraid of Edward?"

In another moment she had fainted at his feet.

"Water! water!" he cried, opening the door.

Several of the scholars, with Madame Le Brun, ran quickly at the unexpected summons. The latter looked very blank at finding her *petite Anglaise* in the arms of the imposing-looking stranger, for he had raised her from the floor, and, unconscious of spectators, was kissing her forehead as he endeavored to restore her.

"*Comment, Monsieur!*" began Madame.

Alarmed, as he was, by Marion's fainting fit, Edward awoke to the necessity of an explanation. "I am her brother," he said in cool, calm English, "and have come to take her home."

"*Son frere!*" said Madame, much surprised, for she had no idea that Marion had so near a relation. Madame Le Brun took another glance at the gentleman, read that in his eye that she did not care to question, and bowed very graciously. Before many minutes Marion was once more conscious, and Madame Le Brun having departed with her pupils, she found herself in a large arm-chair, and Edward, real, genuine brother Edward, face to face. She looked at his dark piercing eye, his complexion olive from exposure to Indian suns, his strong frame that had never succumbed

even to that dreadful climate, and read in the frank look and honest glance, the pure soul that had expanded uncontaminated, even in that land of luxury and ease. Edward Howard was a grand realization of Golden-hair's fairest dreams. As he called her "little sister," and told her he had come to take her back to England, and to be with him always if she liked, for an instant the pain of the last few weary months seemed already only an ugly dream. But then came the thought of the disclosure that must be made, and Marion thought of her mother and Henry Lisle, and shook like an aspen.

"In ten minutes he too perhaps will have left me! Can I bear this?"

Edward was talking very fast of the difficulty he had had to find the school, but Marion heard very little of what he said; she was thinking of the sweet cup about to be dashed from her lips, almost untasted. Should she tell him now? Yes, it would be easier, while they were strange.

She felt faint again with the first effort to speak, but placing her hand upon her heart to still its beating, she rose from her chair.

"Edward," she said, "you have found Golden-hair, but you do not know her yet. Listen, I have done that that has made mamma, and almost every one give me up, and when I tell you what it is, you will perhaps leave me too."

To her surprise, he remained perfectly calm and quiet.

"I would have written and told you, but my life

has been so very sad lately, that a letter would have been nothing but grief; so I waited. Edward, I am a Catholic!"

"And I am a Christian," cried her brother, almost fiercely folding her in his arms. "Golden-hair, you tell me nothing new, so run and pack up your things, for I shall bring a carriage around for you in half an hour. We shall stop in Paris till after the *lour de l'an* with some friends of mine from Calcutta, who are living in the Rue de Grenelle. After that, we shall start for London, where we will set up housekeeping together. Poor dear grandmother! I just arrived in London in time to save the few little things she had left us; for you and I, Golden-hair, are her only heirs. What a sweet, pretty little sister you are!"

CHAPTER XXI.

EDWARD HOWARD had been born in England, but from infancy India had been his home. His earliest associations were connected with the luxuriant vegetation of its tropical climate, and his first remembrance was its *ayah*. His mother and an unmarried sister had accompanied her husband to India, the former only to die there, but the latter married soon after her arrival, and having no children, adopted her nephew as her own. Under her fostering care, the little Edward grew to man's estate, and when the news of the fatal calamity that had befallen Captain Howard was brought to her, it seemed that he was more solemnly than ever entrusted to her protection. When old enough to decide on a profession, he selected that of arms, and joined the regiment in which his father had held the rank of captain. Here he soon won the esteem of all, and few officers were more noted for true chivalrous spirit than Edward Howard. "Whatever I may be, I owe it all to you," he would exclaim, embracing his aunt. "What would the orphan boy have been, with his stubborn spirit and fierce passions, if you had not tamed him?" And he spoke truly, for it was her teaching only that had changed his

stubbornness into firmness and determination, and converted the impetuosity of youth into earnestness and zeal in the cause of truth and honor. Many times had the young man been tried in the furnace of temptation, but he had passed through his ordeal, and came forth unscathed. And yet he had had his tribulations—one heavier than the rest, in the death of his mother-aunt, and soon after that in that of her husband also. All they had was left to the child of their adoption, who, now that he had no longer any ties to bind him to India, began to glance towards the land of his birth. Having, therefore, "sold out," with a moderate fortune Edward started for England, to seek the little bright-haired sister, whose letters had always won his heart.

It was towards the end of October when Edward landed in England. Late one drizzling afternoon, just as the street lamps were beginning to glimmer through the mist, he arrived at the door of Mrs. Howard's house in Islington, with two cabs crammed inside, and piled high on the roof, with all kinds of heterogenous luggage. A bill in the window—"To be let,"—startled him at first, but finding it still inhabited, he drew breath more freely, and leaping from the vehicle the instant it stopped, rapped smartly at the door. After the summons had been repeated twice, a woman's head appeared in the area, and then as rapidly vanished from his sight. In a few minutes a youngster, bearing evident marks of "dirt pies" and bread-and-treacle, opened the door.

"Does Mrs. Howard live here?" asked Edward, who began to think he must have mistaken the address.

A finger thrust in the mouth was the only response.

Edward repeated the question, but the finger remained immovable. Out of all patience, he rapped angrily with his stick, and the result was the appearance of the dirty woman, whose head he had already seen, and who now came from the regions below, wiping the soapsuds from her arms with her wet check apron.

"Go to the baby, Johnny, you young worrit! one 'ud think you hadn't got a tongue in your head," and bestowing a hearty box on his ears, that young gentleman disappeared in his turn, scrubbing his eyes with his coat sleeves.

"Does Mrs. Howard live here?" once more asked Edward.

"She did live here, sir, but she's dead and buried this month."

"Dead and buried!" repeated Edward, in a half-stupefied voice.

"Yes, sir, I'm in keeping the house. There's going to be a sale, I think, though I don't know. It was Mr. Twidgett, the lawyer, as put me in. Would you like to see the house, sir?"

"No, thank you," replied Edward; "can you give me this gentleman's address?"

"Yes, sir, there's an old henvelope in the parlor; if you'll be so good as to wait a bit, I'll get a candle and get it."

"Camberwell," said Edward, reading it; "is that far from here?"

"Indeed it is, sir, just the other hend o' London."

Thanking her for her information, Edward returned to his cab, and ordered the man to drive to the nearest hotel; when his baggage was stowed away for the night, and he found himself seated to a solitary meal, he gave way to his disappointment.

And was this his welcome to England?—death and desolation? The dinner went away almost untasted, and an hour later Edward was on his road to Camberwell.

It was late when he returned, a heavy gloom was on his countenance. He looked gravely displeased, but he rang the bell and ordered tea.

"The rascal!" he exclaimed, as he stirred his tea, "a day or two more, and I should have been late! Poor old soul, her little things would have gone to feather his nest!" He sat in deep thought for nearly an hour, but his brow grew more placid as he grew warmer, for the London fog had chilled him through and through in spite of his wrappers. "Perhaps he has a large family," ruminated Edward, as the waiter having cleared away the tea-things, he prepared his cigar; "poor fellow, he did not seem overburdened with this world's gear. But 'honesty is the best policy' after all, my friend."

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we"—the soldier paused that night in his evening prayer. But not for long, the victory was soon won, and Mr. Twidgett forgiven. "I must see about Marion to-

morrow," was his last thought as he fell asleep, "my little Golden-hair!"

It was a deep autumnal evening, as Edward and his portmanteau was landed by the stage coach at Ennington; but this time the fog rose clear and white from meadow and mill stream, undimmed by the smoke of a half million fires. He walked briskly down the little street, "observed of all observers," for a stranger in Ennington was too rare an occurrence to be suffered to pass unheeded. But had a very legion turned out to scrutinize him, they would have stared unnoticed by the object of their curiosity, so thoroughly was he absorbed in the thought of the anticipated meeting.

"Which is Mrs. Howard's house?" he asked of a little girl he met, who was hugging a loaf almost as big as herself. The child, whose mouth was full of hot bread, nodded to the white house.

Edward walked up the little garden, usually so neat, but now half buried in dead leaves, while china-asters, Michaelmas daisies, and chrysanthemums straggled over the wet paths, beaten down by the rain. The house, too, looked cheerless and uncomfortable, with its soiled blinds and ill-arranged window curtains. He could not have said why, but half the pleasure of his excitement had vanished by the time he reached the door. A gray cat sprang away through the bushes as he knocked, and glared at him angrily; one could hardly have recognized in it the sleek-looking Tyrza of other days.

"Is Mrs. Howard at home?" he asked of an awkward-looking girl who opened the door.

"Mrs. who?" asked the girl, roughly.

"Mrs. Howard."

"Never heerd on her, so I dunnow. I only came from t'other side of the country last week."

"Who is that, Lydia?" screamed a shrill voice over the balusters.

"Dunnow, miss. He says he wants a Mrs. Somebody."

The speaker descended; a venerable spinster, to judge by her appearance, which was more acid even than her voice.

"I fear there is some mistake," said Edward, saluting her politely, "but I was informed that Mrs. Howard lived here."

"So she did," replied the lady, shortly, "but she has gone to live somewhere else, and I have taken the house furnished for twelve months."

"Excuse me," said Edward, whose countenance was below zero, "but could you not give me her address?"

"No. I have lost it, and forget what it was—somewhere in Clifton, I think. But she has behaved so unhandsomely to me, that the less I hear about her the better till I am obliged, so I don't care. Good evening to you," and the door closed heavily.

This time, there was not even the London hotel to turn to, and poor Edward stood at the garden gate, speculating as to his next course of action. At this moment, our old friend, Dr.

Stebbing, appeared in view, and Edward immediately crossed the road.

"Excuse me, sir, but do I speak to the clergyman of the parish?"

"You do, sir?" replied the rector, taking off his hat, with old-fashioned politeness.

"Then I hope you will be able to assist me in my unfortunate position," replied Edward. "My name is Howard; I have just arrived from Calcutta, and my welcome is a very sad one. Of my three only relatives, one is dead, and my mother and sister, whom I expected to find in that very house, are gone, I know not whither."

"For the first trouble, I can, of course, only offer you my sympathy, Mr. Howard," replied the rector, extending his hand; "with regard to Mrs. and Miss Howard, I can, I am happy to say, assist you. But first, let me in their name, bid you welcome to England, for they are old friends of mine: I am too old-fashioned to stand upon ceremony, but I shall be glad to see you home to dinner with me. It is just about ready, and though you must take us as we are, I think you will perhaps stand a better chance in risking your bill of fare with me, than with mine host at the inn. I will tell you the whole story. It is a fortunate thing that you chanced to light upon me, as I dare say, I know more about Mrs. Howard's movements, just now, than any one."

Edward needed no second invitation, but accepted the first as heartily as it had been given, and they were soon on their road to the parsonage.

It was a short walk, but it was the commencement of a long friendship.

"We will not enter into the subject, I think, till after dinner," observed the rector, as he led the way into his sanctum, a very learned looking apartment.

"Certainly not," said Edward; "you have a splendid library."

The old gentleman looked much gratified, and finding his visitor a kindred spirit in his book-worm propensities, it was not long before a dozen curiosities of literature strewed the table.

"See, here comes my wife," exclaimed the doctor, breaking off in the middle of a dissertation upon a new edition of certain Greek tragedies; "I must introduce you." He did so, describing how he had met his new friend, alone and disconsolate, before his mother's door.

"You did not get much of a reception there, I will warrant," said the doctor, laughing. "Miss Smith and her mother are, to say the least, very peculiar. They live like recluses, and generally contrive to get a maid as formidable as themselves. Unhandsome indeed! I happen to know all about that piece of business, and were it not that Mrs. Howard is too high to enter the lists, I would soon force them to their first agreement. They are paying her about two-thirds of the terms arranged."

"And everything is getting ruined for want of cleaning," said Mrs. Stebbing.

"O, a little soap and water will soon set all that to rights, my dear; and now, perhaps, that Major

Howard has come, the other affair may be set straight also."

"That is not the only family business that requires righting," observed Edward; and he described the manner in which his grandmother's property had been left in the hands of her attorney. "She left few things of value," he continued, "but a great deal too much to throw away. The whole affair is a mystery to me, from beginning to end."

"When you have had your dinner, I shall be able, I have no doubt, to help to clear it; so come, for I hear it is ready. You are naturally curious, but Harpocrates himself was not more discreet than I shall be, till you have well dined, and fortified yourself with a glass or two of my old port. I do not know how our edibles stand to-day, especially for one accustomed to Indian luxuries; but be they as they may, you have a hearty welcome, and as we used to learn at school, '*Fames optimus coquus est.*'"

According, however, to the doctor's idea of a good dinner, Edward did but little honor to the meal. His single glass of wine especially outraged his worthy host, but he pressed him to another in vain.

"It is a custom I acquired in India," said Edward, "where a man, to be anything, must be very temperate."

"To be sure, my dear sir," returned the doctor, "there is nothing like moderation, but there is such a thing as the opposite extreme. A man

with such a frame as yours, requires more than one glass of wine to keep up his stamina."

"It has been kept up on less than that in India," replied Edward, smiling, "for I drank very little besides water there."

As soon as Mrs. Stebbing had left them, the doctor began.

"You have been looking so anxious, my dear young friend, for the last half hour, that I can see the sooner I commence my tale the better. Really, however, I hardly know where to begin, for it is a long story, and in some things a sad one."

Edward started, and the dark complexion grew so pale, that the doctor wasted no more words before satisfying his anxiety. He told him all. Of Marion's visit to the Cedars, her conversion, and of her mother's stern determination on hearing of the step her child had taken. He told him also, partly from surmise, and partly from words dropped by Mrs. Howard, of the unfortunate termination of Mr. Lisle's wooing. He told him all he either knew or guessed, and this was more than sufficient to prove to Edward the lonely situation of his only sister. "I have often tried to reason with Mrs. Howard," said the doctor, in conclusion, whose honest eyes bore testimony to his sympathy, "but she is inexorable. To me, there is something fearful in casting off a young girl into such a world as this, simply because she embraced an error. This is surely no way to dispel the infatuation."

"Cruel! Abominable! Most unnatural!" broke

in Edward, with an energy that startled his host. "Can you tell me where she is now?" he asked.

"I do not know; but I can give you Mrs. Howard's address, and you can write to her."

"I would rather do anything else—poor dear child, I will try and find her without a word from her mother, if I can. What a fortunate thing she has left this village, for how I could have met her face to face, I cannot imagine. I know my fiery temper well, and should, I am certain, have said to her what I might have repented afterward; for, let her behave as she may, we must remember she is Marion's mother, and was my father's wife."

There was silence for a few moments, broken at last by the doctor.

"The last time I heard of Miss Howard, she was staying with her grandmother in Islington. She wrote to me herself from there."

"And may be with that grandmother in her grave, for aught we know," cried Edward, passionately. "Forgive me," he added, "but sorry as you are for me, you cannot tell what I feel. The four weary months that I have been upon the sea have been short, in the one bright thought of knowing and seeing Marion. The idea of a simple-hearted English sister, to one whose only experience of women has been the sickly enervated girls of India, or the adventuresses from other lands (who go out to seek their fortunes with ready-made bridal dresses in their trunks) has

been something more than a bright dream. And now—it is dreadful!"

"Nonsense, my dear boy! Cheer up, you have only to look for her; let us hope she is all right somewhere, though it will be, of course, a grief to you to have her a Catholic."

"O, let her be whatever she likes! I shall not complain if I ever find her."

"There is one thing I can do," said the doctor, brightening up; "I can get you the address of her Catholic friends, who undoubtedly know where she is."

"If you only could, my dear sir," cried Edward, warmly, "what thanks should I not owe you?"

"I will go this moment," said the rector, jumping up from his chair; "there is an old cobbler here who goes over to Harleyford to church every week, he will be sure to know it. I shall be back in no time. Keep up your spirits, and go to Mrs. Stebbing in the drawing-room. She was a great friend of your little sister, and will tell you many things about her."

The doctor went, got the address, and, as good as his word, was back in no time. Despite his agitation, Edward spent a pleasant evening with his kind entertainers, who insisted on his staying all night; but notwithstanding the softness of Mrs. Stebbing's spare bed, and the soporific influence of the "night-cap" that the doctor forced upon him, not for an instant did their visitor close his eyes, or lose the consciousness of his trouble. It was

not that he did not hope eventually to find Marion, but the thought of what she had suffered, and must be suffering still, was most painful. Then there was his bitter disappointment in finding everything so different to what he had anticipated, and —let him say what he would—if there was one thing on earth he hated more than another, it was the Catholic Religion. "But I will win her back by kindness," said Edward, turning over to the other side, under the delusion that he might go to sleep.

He rose the next morning so haggard and feverish, that the doctor begged him to postpone his visit to the Cedars till the following day. Edward was, however, fixed in his determination to lose no time in gleaning tidings of his sister.

"But I feel ill, nevertheless," he added. "I have caught a severe cold, and fatigue, excitement, and change of climate, are doing their work. I shall perhaps be worse to-morrow, therefore I must work while I can." So saying, he took an almost affectionate leave of the doctor and his little wife, and walked towards the inn, at which he had already engaged a post-chaise to take him to Harleyford.

It was the first bright day that Edward Howard had seen since his arrival in England. Though very few leaves lingered on the trees, and those were brown and withered, and the scene altogether, notwithstanding the yellow sunshine, looked damp and autumnal, there was still sufficient beauty lurking in the country through which he drove, to raise

his drooping spirits. Still, as he remembered all he had anticipated in his little sister, and the pretty home she had so often described, that he had learned it almost by heart, and contrasted these pictures with the sad reality of the death of his grandmother, the tyrannical parent, the forsaken home and wandering Golden-hair, he felt that though his sadness might pass away a little, it would take something more than a gleam of sunshine to bring anything like real joy into his heart. As the wheels crushed the dead leaves, thickly strewn in the narrow lanes, he could not help comparing them with his own bright anticipations. "I am glad it is October," he exclaimed; "I could not have endured flowers and waving trees, they would have seemed to mock me."

After a ride of two hours, the post-boy stopped at the lodge gates, and, in answer to his summons, Turner quickly appeared, smoothing her apron, and shading her eyes from the sun. There was something so picturesque in the unstudied attitude of the old woman, that Edward could not but look at her with interest, agitated and excited though he was.

"Does Mr. Darrell live here?"

"He do, sir; but he and missus, and the young ladies are all away from home."

"Good heavens!" cried poor Edward, "what shall I do?"

Turner shifted her position to get the sun out of her eyes, and looked at him; but Edward did not notice the scrutiny, as he leaned forward in the

chaise, pondering within himself what he should do next. A sudden prance of the horses, followed by a sturdy "Whoa!" recalled him to himself.

"When do you expect them home?" he asked.

"Every day, sir; for they have been gone near upon a month, leastways all except the master; but they may stay a good bit longer for all that I know yet. It all depends on Miss Edith, sir; for it's only for her health that they are gone at all. She's weakly, rather, poor dear, that she be. You will leave a message for them, sir? I'll be sure to remember to give it them when they come back."

"Why, no," said Edward; "that would be of no use. It is the address of a friend of theirs that I want."

"I see," said Turner; "well now, sir, I am a thinking that p'raps they know it up at the house. If you'll give yourself the trouble to write it down on a bit o' paper, I'll step up in a minute and ask Betsy, for she has lived so long in the family, that I believe she knows all about their friends every bit as well as they do theirselves."

"Do you think so?" said Edward, taking out his pocket-book with great alacrity. "Well, it is a Miss Howard, who was staying here some time ago, that I want to find out."

"Miss Howard!" cried the old woman, falling back. "What! Miss Marion, my own darling child! Is it her as you want? O, deary, deary me, but you'll have to look far enough for her. Laws, sir! she be miles and miles away from here, my own precious child!" And old Turner sobbed heavily.

"What! do you know her then?" cried Edward, who could have hugged the old woman with all his heart.

"Do I know her!" echoed Turner, half indignant at the question. "Wasn't I the first as ever nursed her in this blessed world? Wasn't it me as taught her to walk, and say her own mother's name?"

"Well, I am her brother," said Edward, bluntly.

"Her brother!" exclaimed Turner. "Mr. Edward! my poor master's son! To think of that, now! O, deary, deary me, what queer things does come to pass. O, Mr. Edward, but it does my old heart good to see you, that it does, for now I look at you, I can see my poor old master once again. Ah, sir! but it was a weary day for many hearts when he got drowned."

"That it was," said Edward, with a sigh.

"And then you see, sir, it was double bad for me, because my poor man was lost at the same time."

"Then you are the widow of that old faithful Turner, that my father used to mention in his letters, and who was coming out with him to bring me."

"To be sure I am, sir; after he came to live with the master, I came to be Miss Marion's nurse."

And here followed the history of their life with Captain Howard, and hers with his widow, the whole so interlaced with eulogiums on her pet and nursling that Edward's heart beat still more warmly than ever for his little Golden-hair.

"And a dear faithful old soul you have been, I know," said Edward, holding out his hand, which Turner kissed most devotedly, to the amusement of the post-boy, who walked around the horses' heads to hide a very broad grin.

"Mr. Edward! Mr. Edward! only to think of you're being here!" she cried again and again.

"Well now," said Edward, "can you get me the address? But perhaps you know it."

"No I don't, sir," replied the old woman, shaking her head slowly; "them gimcrack foreign names never would stick in my head, and if they did, it wouldn't be of no use, for I couldn't get them out."

"Foreign names!" cried Edward; "you do not mean to say that she is abroad?"

"That she is," answered Turner, sorrowfully; "all across the sea, where they speaks no English, and is all black, I believe, and pagans, too, I dare say."

"Black and pagans! Why, that misguided child can never have gone to Africa!"

"No, sir, that's not the name; it's Paris, I'm thinking."

"But they are not black there," cried Edward; "though I am not so sure about the paganism," he added, bitterly.

"Ar'n't they, sir? Well, I didn't know. But Mr. Edward, it seems all one and the same thing to me, whether they are black or white, so long as she's in a forrin country. I only know I couldn't walk to her now, nor get a lift in a cart, even if she

was dying, and the thought of her breaks my heart. O, Mr. Edward, sir, but it do seem to me real cruel that her mother should cast her off like an old shoe."

"I think you and I had better say nothing about her, Turner."

"So we had, sir, much better; besides, I promised Miss Marion I wouldn't; but for all that my blood boils above a bit, when I hear the wind at night, and think of her all snug and comfortable like in her bed, not knowing where her own flesh and blood is."

"Come, come," said Edward, smiling; "you are breaking your promise, even now."

"Am I? then the Lord forgive me, and her too."

"Now," said Edward, "will you please get me the address?"

This time Turner fairly started, and in the interim Edward, alighting from the chaise, paced backwards and forwards before the gate.

"Have you been able to get it?" he asked, as Turner reappeared.

"No, sir, that I haven't; nobody here knows it at all; but Betsy says she has no doubt Father Stirling could give it to you."

"Father Stirling! Who on earth is he?" asked Edward, knitting his brow.

Turner hesitated. "He is the priest, sir, and has had a great deal to do with Miss Marion," replied Turner, "for it was him as baptized her, as they call it."

"Was it?" said Edward, stamping his foot; "then if I cannot get the address except from him, I will do without it. Sneaking villain!"

"O, Mr. Edward, sir, but indeed he is a real gentleman. Now, please don't take on so, because you see it can't do no good. I tell you what," added the old woman, soothingly, "go up and wait at the house, and I'll run down to the Father myself and ask him. I'll be bound he knows."

"The Father!" cried Edward, sneeringly; "one would think you were a papist too, old woman!"

"No, no, Mr. Edward, I'm not a papisher, really!" exclaimed Turner, alarmed for her orthodoxy; "but my Liza is, and that's how I come to know him; and somehow, one gets into the way of speaking like other folks does. Besides, he has been real kind to my Liza and the dear boys. Now, go up to the house, there's a dear good young gentleman, and just wait in the drawing-room, and I'll run up to him, and be back in no time; Bennie there will mind the gate. He don't live far off, and you'll see how quick I'll be."

"No," said Edward, after a pause; "I will not trouble you. I have altered my mind. I will go myself, and just tell him what I think of him and his rascally proceedings. A girl of eighteen to be duped into separation from her own mother! That mother may have been harsh in her judgment, I know," he added, half speaking to himself, "but that makes no difference in his crime. 'Leading captive silly women.' Ah, how truly St. Paul

spoke the words of inspiration there! But we shall see. I shall be much astonished, sir priest, if I do not surprise you a little before I have done with you. Well, good-by, old woman!" he exclaimed, turning suddenly to Turner, who stood by, looking anxiously at him. "I am very glad to have found you, for you have been a very ray of brightness to me in my trouble. I shall run in and see you again, if I can, though as yet I hardly know what my plans may be. If my sister is in France, as you seem to think, I may go over there at once, and never visit this part of the country again. But Edward Howard will never forget Marion's old nurse, come what may."

He held out his hand as he spoke, and, after a warm, affectionate grasp, two shining sovereigns glittered on the old woman's palm.

"Mr. Edward, sir, Mr. Edward, please don't!" cried Turner, holding out her hand.

"Hush! just for a remembrance, you know," cried Edward. "Perhaps I shall never see you again."

"Yes, but you will though; I know you will. I shall live to have you come to see me yet, with my own sweet darling hanging on your arm. The Lord Almighty bless you, and may you see her very, very soon."

Without waiting to see the carriage move off, Turner rushed into the house, and seizing up Bennie, began crying over him as if her old heart would break.

"What's the matter, granny?" asked that young

gentleman, rather surprised at this sudden burst of affection.

"O, but he's the image of his father, that he be!" cried Turner, kissing the sovereigns, while Bennie looked as if he did not quite understand this answer to his question.

When Eliza came home that night, and the boys were in bed, she heard a story that made her open her eyes.

"But even now, mother," said Eliza, at the end of the recital, "I can't tell whether he is angry with Miss Marion or not."

"Well," said the old woman, "the fact is, child, I don't think he knows hisself. He's angry with her mother about a bit, I can see, although he is too gentleman-like to say so to the likes of me. He's furious agin the Father, but he has got the poor dear old captain's own heart, bless him, that he has; and he loves his sister so well that he's ready to forgive her anything. Why, bless you, he's talking already of going off to France after her, and it ain't likely he'd go all that way to tell her he'd have nothing to do with her. No, he's sorry she's a papisher, but he don't forget she's his sister, for all that. And very nat'ral, too, I say, for that's just how I feel about you, Liza, my girl."

CHAPTER XXII.

FATHER STIRLING was seated in his study, so deeply engrossed in the perusal of a certain heavy folio, that he did not remark the unusual apparition of a post-chaise standing at his gate. It was not until his housekeeper had placed a card bearing the name of Major Howard, under his very nose, that he raised his head, and, to his no small surprise, perceived the phenomenon.

"The gentleman is waiting in the parlor, Father."

"Major Howard! Who can he be?"

"Don't know, sir; I never saw him before," answered Martha, whose breath had been nearly taken away with astonishment. "I wonder who he is?" she continued, after her master had left the room, and she turned the card over about half a dozen times, as if she expected it to solve the enigma.

Edward was standing when the priest entered the apartment, and, as he refused the chair offered him by the latter, there was, of course, no alternative left for Father Stirling but to stand also.

"Mr. Stirling, I believe?" said Edward, haught-

ily, and drawing himself up to his full proportions.

Father Stirling bowed gravely, and waited for whatever was to follow so formal an announcement.

"You know my sister, I believe?" continued Edward, finding that the other still remained silent.

"I have the honor of knowing a Miss Howard; a Miss Marion Howard, if you allude to her?"

"I do," replied Edward. "Well, sir, I want to know where she is."

"In Paris, I believe," said Father Stirling; "at least she was there when last I heard of her."

"Well, sir, and how came she there?" asked Edward, in an overbearing tone.

"Really, Major Howard, I should have enough to do, were I to attempt to fathom all the motives by which my friends are actuated in their proceedings. But I do not suppose I should be very far wrong, if I were to say I suppose she went to learn French."

"An evasion, sir!" cried Edward, in a loud voice, "and you know it!"

For an instant the hot, proud blood rushed through the veins of George Stirling, but he controlled himself by a great effort, and only looked very much surprised.

"Are you aware, sir, you are giving me the lie?"

"I nevertheless repeat it!" said Edward, in the same tone. "It is an evasion; for you know it

was not to learn French that my sister went to Paris."

"Then, sir, I can only say, since you understand her motives so much better than I do, it is a great pity you should waste your time in asking me about them. I have given you my own impression of her reason for going; but, as it seems I am mistaken, perhaps you will not think it too much trouble to enlighten me?"

"Well, then," replied the other, "my sister went to France because she had no longer a home in England."

"Indeed!" replied Father Stirling. "I am sorry to hear it, though how this could be the case, I can hardly understand. The door of her mother's house was, I know, closed against her; but there were three homes, to my knowledge, open to receive her. Two, permanently, and the third, certainly till she could provide herself with a suitable engagement as governess."

"Engagement as governess!" replied Edward; "and what should make the daughter of Captain Howard require a situation as governess, I should like to know?"

"That which reduces the daughters of many captains to a like exigency—the force of circumstances. Notwithstanding the kind entreaties of her friends, she steadily refused their invitations, and went to Paris to fit herself for a profession that would render her independent of their assistance, I must say, sorely against their desire."

"Acting for once by her own free will," said

Edward, sarcastically. "There was no advantage to be gained from coercing her in this instance, I suppose?"

"Nor in any other," replied Father Stirling. "Miss Howard possesses one of the firmest minds I ever met with in a young person. It would be difficult to coerce her."

"I am sure, sir," said Edward, curling his lip, "your opinion of my sister's strength of mind is very flattering to her, and ought to be very gratifying to me. What indomitable will and courage in so young a girl! To seek a new religion, embrace it, defy her mother, become an exile in a foreign country, and all this, with no other aid than her own firm mind and will! Why, Mr. Stirling, my sister must be an eighth wonder!"

"She would be, Mr. Howard, were this all true; but you have mistaken me. Your sister found a new religion, and she embraced it in this very chapel. She bowed to her mother's decision, though she did not defy it, for she loved her too well for that. She lives even now an exile from England, but she has not done all this by her own mind and will."

"By whose, then? Yours?"

"Mine! That had been as weak, even weaker, perhaps, than hers. No; all that she has done, and is doing, was, and is in the strength of Almighty God."

"And you dare stand in the face of daylight, in the presence of God Himself, and utter such words as those? Speak of Him 'too pure to behold

iniquity,' as counselling and encouraging disobedience, and the want of all natural affection! O, Popery!" he continued, clasping his hands, "can we be surprised at its fruits, when such are its ministers!"

Father Stirling's lip was almost bitten through with determination. "'Whoso loveth father and mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me.'"

"Even Satan," replied his visitor, "can wrest the Scriptures to serve his ends."

"I cannot see what I have wrested in that quotation," observed Father Stirling.

Edward laughed scornfully. "Not in the letter, perhaps, and thus it is that Romanism wins over silly girls. But I should be sorry to insult your common sense by thinking, for one moment, that you yourself believe half the nonsense you profess and teach."

"And yet I would a thousand times rather that you did insult my common sense, than insult God in my sacred calling, as you have done, ever since you entered my house, Major Howard."

"When a man acts as you have done, with regard to my sister, he cannot expect to be treated with anything but contempt."

"You are begging the question, sir; but as I am willing to believe that you are misled, partly, perhaps from prejudice, I will tell you what I really have had to do with Miss Howard. Some few years ago, when quite a child, your sister came here to visit Mrs. Darrell, and was, I believe, even then, rather struck with the ceremonies of our worship.

I myself upon one occasion, had a little conversation with her about the Catholic Sunday, I remember, but that was all. A few days after, she and I were severely injured by the upsetting of a gig, and I did not see her again for five years. At the end of that time she again visited Mrs. Darrell, and one morning while that lady and her daughter went on a little errand of charity, Miss Howard remained with me in this very room. Our conversation was upon religion, but the subject was commenced by herself. She asked me many questions, which I answered to the best of my ability, meanwhile praying earnestly that God might enlighten her. Not another word was said by either of us on the subject, though we frequently met, until she called upon me one Sunday afternoon, and told me, that being thoroughly convinced that the religion of the Catholics was true, she had resolved to become one. Then three weeks later, having instructed her, I received her into the church. You know, it seems, as well as I, the persecution that followed; I trust some day you may hear her trials from her own lips. This is all I have had to do with her conversation, but I candidly tell you, that could I think my poor prayers, or imperfect explanations, had been instrumental in it, I would thank God on my bended knees for having condescended to use so poor an instrument in so great a work. But I cannot felicitate myself on this, for my share in the work was very small. And yet, Major Howard, you come to my house, and as though by some unlawful act I had led away your

sister into a course of crime, you insult me, nay, almost brand me as a liar. Nevertheless, I can willingly believe that you are a gentleman. I can well imagine that your ordinary accents are those of courtesy and politeness; no man but considers that he derogates from his position as a gentleman when he treats a priest with opprobrium and insult. You say, I do not believe half the doctrines I profess. Why then do I profess them? Is this lowly roof and quiet life, think you, a great reward for the pain and trouble of such a life-long deception as mine must be? If I do not believe this religion, why did I, like your own sister, give up everything that the world holds dearest to embrace it? Perhaps you think that I am only holding fast the error in which I was born. If so, you are mistaken. I, too, am a convert. You have charged me with falsehood; would you like me to accuse you of cowardice? My father was a soldier; supposing, like him, I had taken up the arms of this world, I believe I do not err in saying, that you would not have dared to cast an innuendo on the officer, where you have so strangely insulted the priest. But while the soldier of this world resents his injuries, the soldier of Christ must bear them patiently. When the general of an army lies on the bare earth, his followers must not murmur for a softer couch; and the disciples of Him who was 'spit upon, and reviled,' must look for persecution, and complain not when it arrives. I place my cause in the hands of Him, who is, even now, judging between us."

There was a long pause. "Mr. Stirling," said his visitor, walking up to him and offering his hand, "you are right; I have grievously wronged and insulted you. Believe me, though, nothing but the blow I have received in finding my sister so alienated from her family, could have made me forget myself as I have done. But I am truly sorry."

Father Stirling smiled one of his own peculiar heart-smiles, as he warmly grasped the proffered hand. "I can well understand, my dear sir, what you feel, aware as I am, of the horror with which our religion is regarded by the generality of Protestants. Let me say, however, that it is for want of knowing it better. Protestants see a genuflexion, and they cry 'idolatry;' they hear that we worship the Virgin Mary, and they cry 'superstition;' while confession and absolution are defined by no loftier epithet than 'tom-foolery.' Is not this true?"

"It is not far wrong," replied the other, smiling.

"And yet see what men give up for this 'idolatry, superstition, and tom-foolery,'" returned the priest. "And this, not only the ignorant and weak, but men of high mental power and education. Perhaps, Major Howard, in India, the following fact may not have come under your notice, but during your sojourn in England, just remark this: A change from the Protestant to the Catholic religion is rarely, if ever, attended with any worldly advantage to the convert. It frequently entails upon him the loss of home, friends, position, and poverty, sometimes, indeed I may say often, of the whole four

combined. When, on the other hand, do we hear of a person giving up the Catholic religion, who does not with the change, gain some worldly advantage? It may be the wife to please the husband, and ensure the harmony of the domestic circle, or *vice versa*, or else the starving Irishman who gives up, or *pretends to give up* his faith, for bread to feed his little ones. It may be temporal interest that is the bait, such as that gained by the apostate prelates and courtiers, who, under Henry the Eighth, fattened on the sequestrated revenues of the Church. Should a priest of our own day fall from his high estate, it is, I might say without exception, because he has grown weary of his vows, and can find no respectable way of breaking them, but by apostacy. Do we ever see a man suffering for Protestantism? I do not say there is not such a man, but I do say, that with all my experience of the world, I have never met with one. I have seen the apostate priest the hero of the platform, hugged, courted, caressed, by the credulous public, but never have I seen a man leave the high places of our Church, just as all lay fair before him, to creep into an obscure Protestant curacy for his conscience' sake. But I have seen, and do see every day, Protestant clergymen give up good benefices to become obscure priests, or, if married, even to glide silently into the secular life, into some employment perhaps most contrary to their tastes, and only sufficient for their daily bread. And why? Because when God says 'Come!' they do not tarry. And in this, my dear sir, I am not

speaking from what I think or opine, but from what I *know*, and if you will look into the subject for yourself, you will see that I have spoken truly. But come," he added, changing his tone, "I do not see why we should still stand facing each other in this antagonistic fashion; sit down and tell me all you wish to know about your sister. Nothing could give me greater pleasure than to render you any assistance in my power in finding her, for I know no one in whom I am more interested. I may truly say, her troubles have been mine, poor child."

Edward took a chair. "It is her address in Paris I want, for I must go and see her at once, though my plans are as yet so uncertain that I hardly know what my course concerning her will eventually be."

"You have not seen her for some years, I believe?"

"I have never seen her," replied Edward.

"Never seen your own sister! How very extraordinary! Then let me tell you, you will find a little body as good as she is clever, and as pretty as she is good! She is a universal favorite here.

Edward's eyes sparkled. Impulsive fellow! He was beginning to like Father Stirling wonderfully.

"Do you think she is happy in France?" he asked.

Father Stirling hesitated. "Well, no," he said at length. "I do not think she is. Mrs. Darrell showed me a letter from her the other day, throughout which, though it was cheerful, we

could both see the tone of cheerfulness was assumed. I know what French schools are, and I cannot see how a girl tenderly nurtured as she has been, can possibly be comfortable there. I know she must fret after home."

"And she shall have one," cried Edward, impetuously; "I will stay in England, as I at first intended, and she shall be my little housekeeper. But I tell you candidly, I shall leave no stone unturned to root out her new ideas. Before six months are over, you will find her as good a Protestant as ever."

"I can trust her," said Father Stirling, laughing; "she is too humble in her own strength to fall; you, too strong in your fraternal love to tyrannize. There was a tremendous bow-wow when you first came in, but you are too much like Marion for it to last long."

Edward laughed. "Well, I was thoroughly savage with you, I know. Everything I had set my heart on seemed to have vanished like the 'baseless fabric of a vision,' and I certainly traced all my troubles to you. But things seem much clearer now. I cannot tell you what a relief it is to me to find that it was not necessity that drove her abroad. It is also a comfort to know, that one of my poor grandmother's last acts was to befriend her."

"Which she did most tenderly, I can assure you," replied the priest. "Although herself not oppressed with this world's goods, Miss Howard's determination to be a governess was highly dis-

tasteful to her grandmother. She was ready, she said, to retrench in any way for the pleasure of having her with her. But though she was liberal minded, her friends were not, and your sister soon perceived that her religion was the cause of no little discomfort to her kind relation. This decided her course at once, and she went to France."

"Do you think Mrs. Howard knows of her mother-in-law's death?"

"I cannot say. Old Mrs. Howard has been dead a month, has she not?"

"Yes; so at least Mr. Twidgett, her lawyer, informed me, who is the only person from whom I have received any intelligence concerning this sad event. He says that he wrote to Mrs. Howard, informing her of it, but that he did not receive any answer from her. At first I attributed this, rather harshly, perhaps, to indifference, but I now think it probable that the people who have taken her house at Ennington, and who have a very unfriendly feeling towards her, may have neglected to forward it. I shall be glad if it be so, as it will remove one great cause of displeasure I have entertained against my step-mother."

"Yes, it does not do to judge harshly," observed Father Stirling. "It is always safer to hear both sides of the question before giving the verdict."

Edward smiled. "The cap fits," he remarked.

"So does mine," returned the priest, "for within the last half-hour I prejudged somebody very severely."

"And with good reason," replied the other.

"I did not know that Mrs. Howard had left Ennington," observed Father Stirling, "nor do I think your sister is aware of it, for she did not mention the circumstance in her last letter."

"Probably not," said Edward, seeing that there has been no communication between the mother and her child for so long. "I have no doubt myself that Mrs. Howard left Ennington because the place and its associations were too much for her."

"Do you purpose finding her out also?"

"Certainly not. I shall leave her to herself. She has no claim upon me, and as she is amply provided for, I need not trouble myself about her. I could not be decently civil to her if we met, and, therefore, for her sake, Marion's and mine, I had better keep out of the way. No; I shall see my affairs a little straight, and then start for Paris. Will you give me the address?"

"I will go and look for it," said the priest, rising; "it is in my study."

He left the room as he spoke, but in a few minutes returned empty-handed.

"I am sorry to say I have put it away with some letters; but I will make a search and send it down to you in the course of the evening, that is, if you purpose passing the night in Harleyford."

"Such is my intention. Perhaps, as I am a stranger, you will recommend me an hotel."

"The Green Dragon is generally considered the best, I believe," said Father Stirling.

"Then the Green Dragon let it be. May I have the pleasure of your company to dinner with me at six?"

"With the greatest pleasure. I trust by that time I shall have found your sister's letter. *Au revoir!*"

Father Stirling watched the chaise drive off from the little green gate, a smile on his lip, and a strange, earnest light in his calm gray eyes.

"What will be the end of it? Will there not be danger in her constant contact with such a spirit as that? No, Marion Howard, I do not fear for you. Truth shall triumph! God only knows; perhaps he too will become a Catholic!"

He walked back into the house, and taking up his breviary, turned over the pages abstractedly. At length, laying the book upon the table, he passed into the chapel, and walking slowly up to the rails, knelt before the altar.

What was his prayer? Something so earnest, that the time passed unheeded, and the October sun was casting a slanting shadow on the image of Mary, investing it with a ruddy, life-like glow, before he arose from his knees. "This one, even this one," were his last whispered words, as, rising to his full height, he once more bowed his knee as though loath to quit that Presence, the Faith, and Hope, and Love of his lonely life.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"AN ostler from the Green Dragon wants to see you directly, Father," said the housekeeper, opening the parlor door, the afternoon after Edward Howard's visit to the priest.

"The Green Dragon!" cried Father Stirling, opening his eyes, "the Green Dragon—to be sure; but whatever can be the matter? Major Howard has left me a message, I suppose. Show him in."

"Please, sir," said the man, entering, and pulling a piece of hair that seemed to grow on purpose for salutations; "please, sir, warn't it you as dined with a Muster 'Oward at our place last night?"

"To be sure I did."

"Then, sir, the Missus sent me to tell you, as how the gem'men is uncommon bad. He's took off his 'ed altogether, sir, he be."

"When was he taken ill? He complained last night, but I did not for an instant apprehend anything serious; I thought he would have left this morning, or I would have gone to see him the first thing. Have you a doctor for him?"

"No, sir. I went for two on 'em, as I comed here, but they was both out. He was feverish when our Polly, the chambermaid, went to call

him, though he didn't get real, to say bad, till about an hour or so ago."

"Tell your mistress I will be down directly, and will bring Mr. Seymour with me. Poor fellow, what a dreadful thing! Stay, here's something for your trouble."

"Thankee sir," said John, pulling his lock and vanishing.

Edward Howard's illness was no slight attack, and within a few days from the time of his arrival at Harleyford, life and death seemed poised upon an equal balance, and battled stoutly for the victory. As he himself had said, fatigue, excitement, and change of climate, had worked their will on a constitution not too strong; and two sad faces bent over the young soldier's bed.

"It is certainly the crisis," observed Mr. Seymour, taking out his watch and lifting the burning hand.

Father Stirling sighed.

"This is too much for you," said the doctor; "we shall have you knocked up next.

Except to say Mass, Father Stirling had hardly quitted the sufferer's bed.

"I wish now I had written to his sister, but I was afraid of alarming her needlessly, poor child."

"You acted for the best in not doing so, but no one can tell how these things terminate. I apprehended no danger yesterday; now I must say I feel very uneasy. You see the lucid intervals become rarer and rarer. He is a fine young fellow, it would be a great pity."

"*Fiat voluntas Tua*," said Father Stirling; "but the idea of his passing away in his Protestantism is a very sad one."

"And yet I fear it must be so," replied the doctor; "for even were his mind to become clear, as is sometimes the case at the last, it would not be the moment to attempt his conversion."

"God's ways are not man's ways," replied Father Stirling, almost sternly; "nor are our seasons His. We never know; I have seen stranger things than even this would be. But I hope he will recover."

"I shall be glad when Jarvis comes, for I begin to feel very anxious," said Mr. Seymour.

At that moment Dr. Jarvis and another medical man entered the room, and Father Stirling walked down stairs to leave them to their consultation. At the foot of the stair-case he was met by the landlady, who told him that Mr. and Mrs. Darrell had just come, and were waiting for him in the parlor.

It would be impossible to describe the real pleasure with which Father Stirling welcomed his friends.

"We have only just arrived," said Mr. Darrell; "but as soon as we reached the gates, Turner gave us your message, asking me to come to you here. It seems the man told her that Major Howard was ill, and the old woman has been in a dreadful state ever since, especially as the answers to Eliza's inquiries have grown more and more unfavorable. So I sent the girls in, and Mary and I drove down

at once. Now tell us about him. Is he in any danger?"

"Very great danger. Seymour says, humanly speaking, the chances are equal."

"Poor fellow!"

"Have you a good nurse?" asked Mrs. Darrell.

"That we have not; if I could have left him, I would have gone to look for another. She is a dirty, deaf, snuffy old woman, about as useless and uncomfortable in a sick chamber, as you can well imagine."

"You shall have Turner."

"Now that is an act of real charity," said Father Stirling. "I was wondering how we should manage to-morrow, for I must be away all the morning, and I could never have found it in my heart to leave him with Mrs. Brown."

"But you have not yet told us anything about him," said Mr. Darrell; "what sort of a man is he?"

"Thoroughly good;" and here followed the story of Edward's visit to him, with its stormy beginning and tranquil termination. "I dined with him afterwards, in this very room," continued Father Stirling, "and I must say, I never passed a more pleasant evening. He is a man of first-rate education, good sense, and universal intelligence, while his ordinary manners are those of a well-bred gentleman. I can understand his illness very well, for I am sure his excitement must have been something very tremendous, to induce him to transgress the rules of social politeness, as he did at first with

me. Will you go up and see him as soon as these gentlemen come down?"

The creaking of boots on the stairs announced that the consultation was ended, and our little party mounted to the sufferer's room. When Mr. Seymour joined them a few minutes later, they saw plainly that his hopes were vanishing fast.

"One of the most acute cases of brain fever I have ever known," he remarked to Mrs. Darrell; "but we must hope for the best."

"I think I had better stay with you," replied that lady, who had already seated herself in the nurse's chair, and was arranging a pillow as only a woman can. "I can do so very well," she added, placing her cool soft hand on the young man's throbbing brow.

"Indeed, you must do no such thing," replied Father Stirling; "it would be a great deal too much for you after your journey. Mr. Seymour will, I know, agree with me."

"I am sure it would," replied the doctor; "only let us have Mrs. Turner, and we shall manage very well." And so, having straightened the bed, and dismissed the obnoxious nurse, Mrs. Darrell departed with her husband, and about an hour afterwards old Turner set out, on what was truly to her an errand of love.

Father Stirling and his new assistant passed a dreadful night, as side by side they watched their patient, now raving in delirium, now prostrate from utter exhaustion. Mr. Seymour came and went the whole night through, snatching from time to

time, an uneasy sleep in an adjoining room. The hours rolled on, and as the danger became more imminent, the doctor's face grew more anxious still; Turner wept bitterly, and Father Stirling prayed long and earnestly. Another hour of watching, at the end of which the sufferer fell into a doze; not a breath was heard from the watchers, and gradually the slumber grew deeper and more peaceful. When the morning broke Edward was sleeping like an infant, and the three faces, lately so sorrowful, were radiant with delight. The crisis was over, and the patient saved.

It is not our intention to pass with poor Turner through all the dull monotony of the sick chamber, as her charge slowly recovered. He did recover, and before the end of three weeks, was sitting in a large chair before his bed-room fire, pale, it is true, and still very weak, but looking very bright indeed for an invalid. Old Turner, at the further end of the room, sat knitting, looking up occasionally from her work, comparing her patient with the dear old master, and rejoicing in the happy chance that had made her his nurse during his sickness. In the front of the fire, mulling some claret, stood Mrs. Darrell, while Emily was just unpacking a perfect harvest of grapes and nectarines on the little table.

"You are too good!" exclaimed Edward, turning to the latter; "you do not know what I have been thinking of all the morning."

"No. Something very deep, I suppose."

"Deep and simple too. I have been thinking

of the story of the good Samaritan. I need not tell you what brought it into my head."

"The sight of some good old man on a donkey in the street, I dare say," replied Emily.

Edward smiled. "It was not a sight at all, that suggested it, but rather a thought. The thought of the kind hearts among whom a certain wayfaring stranger had fallen. But the stranger, I was thinking of, was even better off than the traveller of the parable, for where he found one good Samaritan, I have found many."

"You! I see then, Mr. Egoist, you have been thinking about yourself. If you were a Catholic, you would not be allowed to do that."

"Indeed! What, then, do Catholics think about?"

"Other people."

"*Ecce signum!*" said Edward, pointing to the fruit; "well, then, I must be half a Catholic, for I know I think very often of all of you. If Marion be only half as good, I shall be satisfied."

"Marion! She is a little angel, Major Howard, you will be delighted with her."

"When I see her, perhaps I may," said Edward, moving restlessly in his chair; "but I wonder when that will be, I gain strength so slowly. I can hardly cross the room yet."

"Nevertheless you are strong enough to bear the journey to the Cedars, I am sure," said Mrs. Darrell, turning around from her claret; "and I shall call and speak to Mr. Seymour about it, this very afternoon."

"What! hamper yourself with a sick man, my dear Mrs. Darrell!" expostulated Edward; "indeed, this must not be."

"But indeed it must," said Mrs. Darrell. "Come now," she added, merrily, "you have borne such a good character for patience during your illness, you must not grow refractory now. You are very dull here, and want fresh air and society, and you must have them. Three weeks in one room is enough for anybody."

"Have I been ill only three weeks?" asked Edward. "It seems an age. I wonder what poor Marion is suffering all this time. I am afraid she is very unhappy in France."

"I hope not, otherwise I should be anxious for her to come to us at once. As it is, I think it would be better that she should remain until you are well enough to bring her. The journey from Paris is long and dreary for a young girl alone. It seems strange not to let her know any of these late events, but to tell her you are here and ill, would make her very uneasy; and, of course, if she knew you were in England, we could not account for your not going to see her in any other way."

"Besides," rejoined Edward, "I know it is a silly idea, but I have set my heart on surprising her."

There was another thing, too, on which he had set his heart, and that was on making her a Protestant, before he again subjected her to the influence of the Darrells. Grateful as he was to them, he still shrank from their religion.

The very next evening saw Edward on the drawing-room couch at the Cedars, where a cheerful party were gathered around the first fire of the season. What is there, gentle reader, in a first fire? Nothing more than usual, surely. And yet, you and I both know well, how brightly it burns and dances up the chimney, and how it laughs among the cups and saucers, putting the very lamps and tapers themselves to shame. Another will be lighted to-morrow, and it will be a cheerful, bright, and homely fire, but it will not be as redolent of comfort, as ecstatic in its sparkles, as last night's blaze. Is it the first gushing melody of the home spirit, the first kiss of his lip, as he nestles upon the hearth? Perhaps: I know not, but I do know, that one has brighter thoughts and dreams beside the first autumn fire, than anywhere else on earth.

Happy as they were, our little party were very quiet, the three ladies busy with their needle-work, and Mr. Darrell and Father Stirling with their chess. Edward looked from one to the other; poor fellow, it was the first English fire-side he had ever seen, and he thought of Marion, and formed a bright vision of many evenings such as this. Was he not satisfied, when in all human certainty he might soon expect the vision to be realized? Men are strange beings! riddles in their longings, riddles in their discontent—not quite. He could not have said why. Perhaps, dearly as he loved his little sister, another idea indefinable even to himself, had entered the soldier's heart.

For Marion, he had sold his commission, crossed the ocean, and left the friends of his childhood, and yet at this moment, perhaps for the first in his life, he felt as though her affection would not content him. He glanced around the room again, and covered his face with his hand, and thinking that he slept, the voices grew more hushed. But he was awake, keenly awake to every sound and word, especially to the music of two girlish voices, though he could not tell which was the sweeter of the two.

"You must take your medicine, for you know Mr. Seymour has made me head nurse," said Emily, handing him the glass. "Stop, let me shake up the pillow."

It was soon done, and Edward sank back again, thanking her with his eyes; had it been a block of stone placed to receive him, the touch of those light fingers would, he believed, have made it a bed of roses. As it was, he nestled in the down, and, for the first time in his life, wove a romantic story.

The days flew by, till the couch was exchanged for a chair, and that again for the carriage. Then came walks, and even rides on horse-back, until the full tide of life and strength returned, and Edward was himself again. Yet not himself, for though the red blood mantled in his cheek, and the light shone in his eye, he was an altered man. The soldier who had been impregnable to the battery of so many Calcutta seasons, had yielded without a struggle to the first English glances,

though strange to say, he could not tell which of the two sisters had conquered him. "Who could choose between them?" he asked himself, as a morning or two before his intended departure, they tripped into the room, radiant in their new winter bonnets, to take him to see a waterfall a mile or two from the house. "One might as well try to decide between the red and white rose, or the morning sunshine and evening moonlight!"

The walk to the waterfall was a merry one, for the girls laughed and chatted all the way, and Edward was exuberant in the joyousness of recovered health, and the happiness of the moment.

"If it could be always like this," he whispered; but when he thought of Marion, a pang of reproach shot through his heart. "My darling Golden-hair!" and the truant sped back to his allegiance.

"Papa and mamma talked of coming to meet us," observed Emily, as they were returning; "if they do so, I suppose we shall see them very soon What a delicious heap of leaves to walk in!" she exclaimed, suddenly bounding like a kitten, to the other side of the road, and rustling them with her feet. "I do so love this. Come, Edie."

"No, thank you, I do not like to trouble the dead. '*Requiescat in pace.*'"

Emily laughed, and continued her walk. "I wish all sacrileges were as harmless as this."

"'*Requiescat in pace,*'" repeated Edward; "it is sweet to repeat those words over forgiven injuries,

old sorrows, and dead friends. It is a good wish uttered in pretty words."

"Very," replied Edith, "especially in our religion, where the words are a prayer as well as a wish."

This was almost the first time religion had been mentioned to him by any of the family, and, coming as they did, from Edith, the words made him look up in surprise.

"I mean what I say," she added, smiling. "It seems to me, Mr. Howard, that a religion that does not pray for its dead, must be very cold and comfortless. If those I loved were to pass away, my only consolation would be to pray for them."

"Am I simply to bow, or am I to answer what I think?"

"The latter, certainly."

"Then forgive me, if I say, that the beauty of the idea is no excuse for the falsity of doctrine. We do not pray for the dead, because we do not believe in the efficacy of such prayers. As the tree falls, so it must lie."

"Most assuredly, for there is no repentance beyond the grave. A man dies only once, and then he dies for either heaven or hell."

"So we say, but you go further, and imagine a third place," rejoined Edward.

"Indeed! Where is it?"

"I do not know; it would be rather difficult to decide; but I mean purgatory. You believe in that, do you not?"

"I should hope I do," replied his companion, smiling; "but I look on purgatory as heaven."

"What can you mean, my dear Miss Darrell? If your idea of purgatory be what I have been told it is, it must be a peculiar kind of paradise!"

"Perhaps so," replied Edith, "but it is part of paradise, nevertheless. Is not the certainty of heaven, think you, paradise in itself? Suppose, Major Howard, you built one mansion with a porch, and another one without, how many houses would you possess?"

"Two, of course."

"Then call one of these houses hell, and the other heaven, with its porch purgatory; and you will understand what I mean. For what would centuries of suffering be, compared to an eternity of joy, but a little, little porch? It has always amused me, from a child, to hear people outside the Church talk as though three distinct hereafters lay before a Catholic. What can there be for a saint but heaven, and for a sinner but hell?"

"But if heaven be limited to saints, it will be but scantily peopled," observed Edward.

"And yet it certainly is limited to them," replied Edith, "for we know that nothing defiled can enter the kingdom of heaven; and what is the world at large, but fearfully, dreadfully defiled?"

"The Blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin!" exclaimed Edward.

"Yes, I know that, for the Catholic looks to Christ, and to Christ alone, for the remission of his sins through the merits of His Blood shed for the whole world on Calvary. Without this, there would be no treasure in the Church no grace

in any Sacrament, no efficacy in any contrition, no salvation, no heaven for any of us. Nothing but hell, black, and yawning for all."

She paused, but her companion made no reply.

"You did not think our Christianity was so simple, perhaps," remarked Edith.

"Candidly, I acknowledge, I did not. I did not expect half such a clear, bright confession of the great Gospel Truth. But you are an exception, Miss Darrell. Upon what do the generality of Catholics build their faith?"

"Upon 'Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.' Do you think, Major Howard," she suddenly asked, turning upon him the full light of her dark, earnest eyes, "that I would tell you an untruth?"

"I am certain you would not," was the reply.

"Then believe me, when I tell you, that in that name the faith, the hope, the heart-love of every Catholic centres. The sunless world, the soulless body, the sightless eye, would be but faint types of a Christless Catholicity. You might as well talk of heaven without God."

"But then, if your faith in the merits of your Redeemer be so strong, where is the need of purgatory?"

"I can simply repeat what I said before, that nothing defiled can enter heaven."

"But can anything be defiled, that has been washed in the Blood of the Lamb."

"Certainly not," replied the young girl; "hence it is that there are souls that pass at once to the presence of God. Souls that have lived in such

union with Him, have toiled so incessantly at the work of their salvation, and sought so constantly the cleansing stream to wash away each speck and spot of contamination, that by the grace of God, who gave them this disposition, they have passed straight and undefiled into the Beatific Vision. Clean in heart, they see God. But what shall we say of the tepid, the negligent, the slothful, the timid believer? Shall such a one be wafted straight to that heaven, for which, perhaps, he has hardly ever sighed? And yet that man was a believer. There have been moments in which he would have died for his religion, others when he has even wept over his sins, because they had offended a Father, whom with all his carelessness, he really loved, and dying, he has called on him for pardon, and on Christ for help and grace. Shall that loving soul, although so feebly loving, be cast into hell, to become the prey of the devil and his angels? Who could love our dear Lord, and believe in his love for us, and imagine such a thing as this? But when he shall have expiated his sins, shall have been tried in the furnace seven times heated, and when he shall have been purified like fine gold, then we believe he shall be hailed in the mansions of eternal rest, and find a home among the 'Everlasting Hills.'"

At this instant they were joined by Emily, who seemed rather surprised at the turn the conversation had taken.

"I am glad you have come," said Edward; "Miss Edith is trying to convert me."

"I wish she could," replied Emily; "though I

am afraid that is more than she will manage in one morning's work."

"Well, certainly, purgatory is not a very inviting doctrine to begin with," answered Edward; "I must say I infinitely prefer the Protestant idea of stepping quietly and comfortably into heaven at once."

"There, now," exclaimed Emily, laughing; "you yourself have exactly given the difference. What we believe is a *doctrine*, what you believe an *idea*. You could not possibly have given a better definition."

"I did not intend it as such, I can assure you," returned the gentleman; "my definition would be just the reverse, of course."

"You do not make any distinction between mortal and venial sins?" observed Edith.

"Decidedly not. 'Sin is the transgression of the law;' so says the Bible, nor does it say more. I find nothing of the words mortal and venial."

"Do you believe, then, that when you have an uncharitable thought, or practice a little act of selfishness, you are on a par with Nero or Caligula?"

"No; I have too good an opinion of myself for that."

"And yet, rash judgment and selfishness are sins, are they not?"

"To a certain extent they are, and consequently displeasing to God, for which reason, I should do my best to avoid them."

"But suppose you do not avoid them, for human nature, remember, is very frail; what then?"

"I must repent."

"But suppose you do not even do this, for human nature is also very blind, and little sins glide through our consciences, very much as the metal held in solution passes with the water through the sieve. What then, do you expect to go to heaven in spite of the 'trangression of the law,' or is your portion to be with Nero and Caligula? You see you must make a distinction in the gravity of sins. Shall I tell you our doctrine on the subject?"

"Yes, do. I like to hear you talk about your religion, you look so earnest. I am not surprised at Marion changing hers, with you for her pioneers."

"Major Howard," said Edith, pausing in her walk, and looking at him steadfastly, "you must not give either Emily or myself the credit of Marion's conversion, for she never spoke to either of us on the subject until she had quite made up her mind. We prayed for her very hard, just as we are doing now for you, but we never said a word to her."

"You do not mean to say you pray for me to become a Roman Catholic!" said Edward, laughing.

"To be sure we do," replied Emily.

"Then heartily, most heartily do I thank you; but, believe me, that prayer, sweet as are the lips that breathe it, has never yet pierced the 'golden pavement,' though may God grant, that as it sinks back to earth, it may fall in blessings on the heads of the two fair supplicants."

"Shall I tell you, Major Howard, what a little angel whispered to me last night?" asked Emily, "just a little secret."

"Do; angels' whispers and ladies' secrets are worth hearing."

"Well then, he told me you would one day be a Catholic."

"Did you believe him?"

"I did; and mark my words, if ever you are a Catholic, you will be a priest. Mind, you are to say your first Mass for Edith, and your second for me."

"Agreed," cried Edward, laughing, while Emily joined him with all her heart.

Why did another little figure bow her head, and rustle the dead leaves in her turn?

"And so you wish me to be a Catholic?" continued Edward, musingly. "Well, I can thoroughly appreciate the kindness of the hearts that breathe the wish, believing, as those hearts do, that in the word Catholic is concentred all that is most glorious in God and goodness; but it will never be. Catholics cling too much to the merit of their own good works for me, seeing, as I do, in the word of God, that 'salvation is by faith alone.'"

"I cannot understand that," replied Emily, "for the 'devils believe and tremble.' For myself, I cannot imagine how the two can be separated, for 'faith without works is dead,' and works without faith would be only heathen virtue. People talk a great deal of our reliance on our good works, but

it seems to me, after all, that we are really saved by them, and that we cannot be saved without. It is not only the atonement that is necessary, but the application of that atonement to our souls; for though Christ has died for the whole world, many thousands fall into hell every day in spite of Him. And why is this, but simply because they hate God and love sin. Now, it is a bad action to do either the one or the other, and they are lost. Every day, let us hope, many souls are welcomed in heaven. Why is this? Because they loved God and hated sin. Here are two actions, and they are saved. I can only tell you what I think in very simple words, for I am not so used to talking about religion as Edith is, and cannot express myself so well, but do you see what I mean?"

"Perfectly."

"Then, when the great good work is performed, and the sinner is in a state of grace, we believe that any other good work he may perform expiates the temporal punishment due to him, and merits for him a greater increase of glory in that heaven that Christ has opened for him. But if Edie explained our doctrine of mortal and venial sin to you, you would understand this better. I do not pretend to be a controversialist, and it was she who entered the lists with you. I am only the 'squire, to carry the shield and hand the weapons."

"I am sure I know very little of controversy," replied Edith, smiling; "but I know what I believe as a Catholic, and why I believe it. *Voilà tout.* A mortal sin is a grievous offence against God which

deprives the offender of the friendship of God and sanctifying grace, and renders him deserving of eternal punishment in hell. Venial sin is a smaller offence against God, which does not deserve hell, but which must nevertheless be expiated before entering heaven. This may be by repentance and suffering here, or by purgatory hereafter."

"I see. Then purgatory has nothing to do with mortal sin?"

"Yes, it has, in this way: the temporal punishment due to every grievous sin will be inflicted there, if not expiated before in this world. I see you do not understand this. The Catholic faith teaches that, besides the eternal punishment due to sin which, as all believe, was turned from us only by the death of Christ, there yet remains another, over and above, and this is what is called the 'temporal punishment.' I can show you what this is by an example from the Old Testament. David committed a sin, and Nathan the prophet, sent by God, visited him. The king repented: 'I have sinned,' said he, 'against the Lord.' And Nathan replied, 'The Lord hath taken away thy sin; thou shalt not die.' Thus was the eternal punishment remitted, but see what followed after. 'The child that is born to thee shall surely die.' Here was a temporal punishment inflicted to satisfy the offended majesty of God, though the sin had been forgiven. Again, do you remember how, in his pride, David once numbered the people? Once more he repented, once more he was forgiven, but once more was the temporal punishment

inflicted. Seven years of famine, three months flight before his enemies, or three days pestilence. He chose the last, but imagine what an alternative! Is it not enough to make one tremble, for how shall we stand if a penance such as this was inflicted for a sin comparatively slight, and that after it was forgiven?"

"But this was not purgatory."

"It was not inflicted in the place, or rather state, that we call purgatory, but it was a purgatorial or cleansing punishment, inflicted to render David once more pure in the sight of God. Temporal punishment is not by any means invariably inflicted after death. God frequently sends it here in the form of some heavy cross. More than this, we may even anticipate it in this life by some penance, voluntarily borne, to disarm the vengeance of God. It may also be forestalled by good works, as when our Lord says, 'He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins;' and again, 'Give alms, and all things are clean unto you;' and when St. Paul says, 'Charity covers a multitude of sins.' We may anticipate it by prayer, as we have once more an example in king David, for part of the penance inflicted on him in the three days pestilence was remitted upon his prayer at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite."

"There is one thing I should like to know," said Edward, after a pause of some minutes duration. "Do you believe God forgives a sin, however great, upon the repentance of the sinner?"

"Certainly; provided it is a true repentance, not only a horror of hell, or a remorse caused by human considerations, or a regret springing from personal suffering, caused by one's own sins, though these are all well and right in their place. It must be a true, deep, earnest compunction for having offended so great a God, and so good a Father."

"And this you believe is enough to save the soul?"

"Undoubtedly it is."

"Then why confess your sins to a priest?"

"Because the sacrament of penance is the medium God has Himself chosen for the confessing of the sin, and the according of the pardon."

"I do not see this," replied Edward.

"'Whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained;' and again, 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.'"

"Of course I knew, my dear Miss Darrell, that these two texts were coming; if it were not for these, your doctrine would indeed be unsupported. But, just look here. Can you imagine anything more likely to have a demoralizing effect upon the mass of the people, than the idea, that let a man's sins be what they may, he has only to go and whisper them to a priest, and then, these forgiven, commence afresh his course of crime and iniquity?"

"Not more than your own doctrine of faith and repentance is demoralizing," replied Edith. "There

is only this difference between you and ourselves. The Protestant who repents, kneels down in his own chamber and confesses his sins, to go forth and sin afresh, while the Catholic has the additional trouble of going to the priest. Rather, therefore, than an easier process, the Catholic's confession is the more difficult one of the two. But if you imagine that a few words whispered, for form's sake, in a confessional, will ensure forgiveness of the sins confessed, you are grievously mistaken. An humble gesture, a bowed head, a sad voice, may deceive a priest, and the absolution may be pronounced, but God looks at the heart, and if sorrow for sin be wanting, that absolution will not be ratified in heaven. 'To err, is human; to forgive, divine.' Man, weak, erring man, may rise from his knees, and quit the confessional, only to sin again. But if while he spoke those words, 'I confess to Almighty God,' he did confess his sins, resolving, with all the steadfastness of his heart, to keep from evil, as from his Father's most bitter enemy, both you and I, Major Howard, know that that repentance was genuine, however signally he may fall afterwards. If, however, that man should content himself with a cold, callous confession, unaccompanied by sorrow, or if he should wilfully conceal one grave sin, that man would leave the church, even deeper dyed in iniquity, for he would have added sacrilege to his former guilt. What the pen is to the writer, such is the priest to the hand of God. A weak, frail instrument, it is true, but the medium of great and glorious things. Of all the

seven pillars of the Church, there is not, after the Holy Eucharist and Baptism, such a sacrament as this. You are, I believe, Major Howard, a Christian; you have led, I do not doubt, a consistent, conscientious life; but there must be shadows on your conscience you do not like to look at. Could you once hear those words, 'Go in peace,' as the door is closed, you would understand why I feel so deeply as I speak to you of this. Could you but glance into it for one moment with the eye of faith, you would see what great and beautiful things there are in our religion. They lie like pearls and precious stones at the bottom of a river, but the water is transparent, and he who looks may see them shining through, while he who dives for them may draw forth a shining store!"

"Sweet enthusiast!" thought Edward, as he glanced at the beaming eye and flushed cheek of the young speaker. But he said nothing, and our little party moved on in deep silence, broken only by the wind as it creaked the leafless branches, and by the discontented twitters of the sparrows overhead. But a fervent prayer was rising from one heart, long since detached from earth, and a strange new day-dream was flitting around another, while Edward found that the walk to the waterfall had decided a wavering balance.

Soon after, Mr. and Mrs. Darrell appeared in sight, and the little party hurried to meet them.

"Have you enjoyed your walk?"

"Immensely," replied Edward, and he spoke the truth.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HARDLY an hour had elapsed from the moment of Edward's arrival at the school, before Marion found herself packing her trunks in the little room at Madame Le Brun's. Even now she was obliged to pause occasionally in her task, to reassure herself that she was in reality up and awake. "Suppose it should be a dream, after all, and brother Edward only a phantom of the imagination!" But the garments strewed around were sufficient to prove that it was a veritable packing up, and her boxes were just deposited in the court, when she heard Edward's voice summoning her to the voiture.

It was difficult for the brother and sister to imagine that they had only just met, and had never met before. Having left the luggage at his friend's house, Edward drove back to a grand restaurant on the boulevard, all light and glitter, that they might have the first few hours all to themselves. They had a great deal to say, and before they left the table, Edward had sighed over her conversion, stormed, in spite of his good resolutions, over her banishment from home, and had nearly laughed himself into a fit over Miss Tubbler

and her exactions. But Marion could not imagine that he saw the gravity of the case.

"Listen, Edward," she expostulated, as they walked home along the brilliant boulevard, "if I do not stop and go on with the lessons, Miss Tubbler will expect me to pay her, I do not know how much money."

"She is quite welcome to do that," rejoined her brother; "now just explain the whole affair to me, for it seems a most complicated piece of business."

Marion did so.

"And how much have you already paid her?" asked Edward, in conclusion.

Marion named the amount.

"Then she may return you a few pounds if she likes, for conscience' sake, or retain them in remembrance of a silly little girl. O, deliver me from Miss Tubbler! what is she like?"

"A woman, I suppose," answered Marion, laughing.

"I question it," replied her brother.

At this moment Edward hailed a voiture, and they were soon driving towards the Champs Elysees.

"Golden-hair," asked Edward, in a low voice, "what is this story I hear of a certain curate.?"

Marion's face, which had been raised to hear the question, was suddenly turned away.

"What is it?" he asked again.

"Only that he has given me up too."

"Were you engaged to him?"

"No."

"Then how could he give you up?"

"He came to Harleyford to ask me to be his wife, and I told him I was a Catholic," said Marion, firmly.

"And what then?"

"He went away, and I have never seen him since."

"And do you care for him?"

Silence gave consent.

"Well, cheer up, darling," cried Edward; "it will be all right yet. I do not at all despair of seeing you a Protestant again. When we are settled, I will get you some thoroughly good books on the subject, and take you to hear some of the very best preachers, and we shall see if they do not convert you back again."

Marion started up with such energy that she fairly startled him. "Do you suppose," she exclaimed, "that I would read a Protestant book, or enter a Protestant church? Do you think I want to be converted back again? I would rather ten thousand times stop here and work at Miss Tubbler's lessons all my life. Edward, my brother, let us understand each other at once. I have longed for you, looked for you, prayed for you, as earnestly as I should think a poor shipwrecked sailor looks for land; but, unless you promise to leave me free, quite free in my religion, I dare not go back with you. Even if it killed me to see you go without me, I would welcome death before apostasy!"

"Golden-hair," said her brother, "you misunder-

stand me. I promise, before God, to leave you free to serve Him, as you will, when you will, where you will. Is that enough?"

Her head dropped upon his shoulder. "I will try to be all you can wish in everything else."

"That promise is more than enough," said Edward; "for I only want a sister's love."

The time in Paris passed quickly by. The sea was soon crossed again, some of the furniture removed from the little house in Islington, more bought, and before many weeks, Marion found herself the installed mistress of a very pretty villa in one of the sunniest suburbs of London. Edward's vision was realized, and he thought so, as one windy evening in February he and Marion sat in the neatest of little parlors, learned-looking with his books, home-looking with her nicknacks, and bright with their grandmother's Indian curiosities. The little copper kettle sang merrily between them, just as he did a year ago, when Marion and the dear old lady, now so silent in death, discussed her conversion and future plans. His song was a merry one, too, although he had commenced at first with rather a melancholy whirr, as though in heart he still lingered among the shadows of the past, with the little coterie at Islington, and was not yet accustomed to his villa home. But soon he bubbled gayly, and Marion, who had been for some time watching his red nose very earnestly, rose to make the tea.

"I shall be getting jealous of that book soon, Edward," she exclaimed, as he sat, after the

fashion of all book-worms, hastily conning the last few words of the chapter before laying it by.

"Buckland" closed with a bang, and in two minutes they were as merry as the cricket, whose song reached them even there, from his home under the kitchen hearth.

"I had a letter from the Cedars to-day," observed Marion, as she handed him his tea.

"How are they all?"

"Very well. It was from Mrs. Darrell, and she told me two pieces of news."

"What are they?"

"One is, that Joe is coming home next month. It appears he has been ill, and has been recommended to return to England; but Mrs. Darrell seems to think that he is, in reality, tired of the sea, and wishes to settle down at home."

"And what is the other piece of intelligence, if I may ask?" inquired her brother.

"Something that ought to make me very glad, but it seems so strange, that I cannot realize it at all."

Edward began to feel strangely nervous, and wished she would come to the point at once.

"I suppose I may tell you," she continued, "though as yet it is, to a certain degree, a secret. One of the girls is going into a convent. Guess which!"

"Good heavens!" cried Edward, as though a fearful catastrophe had been related to him.

"Well, which is it?" asked Marion.

"Edith, of course," said Edward, crossly, be-

ginning to weigh his teaspoon on the edge of his cup.

"Then you are wrong."

The teaspoon was just balanced, but it lost its equilibrium in an instant.

"What, Emily!" cried Edward; "well, you do astonish me! I never could have thought it. I am no judge, of course, in such matters, but I should have imagined Edith the very girl likely to be taken by the fancied charms of conventual life; while, as for that laughing, chattering, beautiful Emily, she seems the very antipodes of a nun."

"This is because you do not know them yet; those who know Emily best, say she lives constantly in the presence of God. With all her light-heartedness, I am certain you never heard her say a giddy word, nor do a giddy thing."

"Never; on the contrary, the real earnestness of her character often shines through in those very words and actions, but, for all that, Edith is much more sedate."

"Not in reality, but she is very much quieter. And yet she is a more general favorite than her sister, demure as she is, especially with gentlemen."

"Is she?" ejaculated Edward, rather dryly.

"Which do you like best?" asked his sister.

"Emily is decidedly the nicer looking; indeed, I do not think I ever saw a prettier girl in my life, and her manners are very winning."

"Am I to infer from that, that she is the favorite?" asked Marion, laughing.

"No, not at all; mind has always a great charm for me, and I consider Edith highly intelligent. It is a pity she is so quiet, for when she comes out, she shines."

"I know that," replied Marion.

"I have heard of light being hid under a bushel," said Edward, after a long pause, "but I never heard of a greater sacrifice, than for that beautiful girl to shut herself up in a nunnery. If she were a fright, it would be a different thing."

"Edward, Protestant though you are, you would not surely offer only ugly, worthless things to God."

"Certainly not, in anything I thought He really cared to accept. I should, of course, consider nothing too good to offer Him. But He has never asked people to become monks and nuns, and never will. It is a useless, unnatural life."

"How so?"

"In the stupid vows they make, to be sure."

"And yet, dear Edward, of these three vows, the first, on a certain occasion, was a command of Christ Himself, the second was enjoined by an apostle, while the third is added to enable frail humanity to carry out the other two."

"How do you mean?"

"Simply this. A young man once came to our blessed Lord, to ask what he must do to be perfect. Not merely to lead a good, consistent life, mind, for that an easier answer might have been returned, but to be *perfect.* The answer was, to sell all he had and give it to the poor, and follow Jesus.

Here, then, is the nun's first vow of voluntary poverty. With regard to the next, of celibacy, St. Paul speaks of those who marry as doing well, (as of course they must, for matrimony is a sacrament,) but he speaks of those who marry not, as doing better. And who was it, who, with His own lips, said the better part should not be taken from her, who, giving up even the lawful cares of this life, sat at His feet instead? Surely, what Christ has approved, and St Paul enjoined, must be right, and hence, as I said just now, the second vow of the recluse. But this was not following to the letter that divine command, 'Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' True self-denial is difficult to practice, for naturally a man is tender to his own flesh. The horse without a bridle often runs to its own destruction, and where could such a bridle be found for man as obedience? Another man sees our faults, and is a beacon to us; he sees our virtues, and can encourage us on our way; he sees our dangers, and can warn us. But this is not all. If we would learn to practice self-denial in its intensest form, we must give up our will. Heart, liberty, life itself, is nothing to this; for until a man knows what it is to do everything at the bidding of another, he can never realize the full sternness of the command, 'Leave all and follow Me.' Thus the religious makes the greatest of sacrifices, gives up all, and makes the third vow of obedience."

There was another long pause, filled up by the little copper kettle, who sang as vigorously as a choir of nuns.

"I wish you would look a little, just a very little, into our religion," remarked Marion.

"Now, Golden-hair, I declare that is too bad. Just think how sharply you were down upon me, when I asked you to examine mine."

"Because you asked me to reëxamine that in which I had lived nearly all my life, and doctrines which, having thoroughly understood, I saw good reason to disbelieve, or I should never have disbelieved them. I, on the contrary, ask you to look into a subject on which you have never, perhaps, thought seriously for ten minutes together."

"How do you know that?"

"Of course, I do not know, it is only a surmise. Tell me, however, that you have seriously considered it, and I shall be satisfied."

"Candidly then, I never have, and equally candidly, it has been because I have never thought the subject worth the trouble."

"Are you afraid to read one of my books?"

"Not at all. Indeed, I should rather like to do so, that I might understand your arguments better."

"Then I will bring one to your room this evening."

That night the well-worn, shabby "Keenan" lay on Edward's toilette.

It was about a month after this that Marion, who was writing a letter, heard her brother's step in the passage, much earlier than he usually returned from the British Museum, where he spent

the hours that would otherwise have hung heavily on his hands.

"Edward!" she exclaimed, springing from her chair, "how early you are! Is there anything the matter?"

"Nothing, you little nervous thing!" was the reply, as he pulled her back in her chair to the no small disarrangement of her curls. "There, just order tea an hour earlier, and go on with your letter. The fact is, I want to catch the train, for I am going away for a few days. Shall you be very dull without me?"

"I shall miss you, of course, but I dare say I shall find plenty to do. I might have the garden altered while you are away. Shall I?"

"Do, it will give you occupation;" and here followed a long list of instructions, very precise in detail, but having nothing to do with either you or me, dear reader.

"I am glad you are going," said Marion, when he had concluded, "for I think you require a change of some kind. You have been looking pale, almost ill, for the last few days."

"I know that; but the change I most want is something to do. Where do you think I am going?"

"I have not the slightest idea."

"To Harleyford."

"To Harleyford! What, to the Cedars?"

"Yes; I am going to be introduced to Joe, and if I like him, I shall make a proposal to Mr. Darrell."

"I am sure you will like him, everybody does; but what are you going to propose?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, I have been cogitating very much over a letter his father wrote me yesterday concerning him. I have been thinking that, as he has energy, I a little experience of the world, and both of us a moderate capital, we might enter into a partnership in which these three qualifications might be very useful."

"Edward, I should like it so much," cried Marion; "what a first-rate idea!"

"At first I thought we would go together; but as the weather is still cold and cheerless, I decided that we would ask the girls here first, and that you should go back with them to Harleyford, when you would have brighter days for a country visit."

"I should like that much better; you always guess my wishes exactly."

"It would be hard if I did not study my 'lone and only bird' a little, I think."

"I do not know when Emily goes into the convent," said Marion; "but ask her to come and spend a little time with me first."

"I will. And now come and help me to pack up my portmanteau, for I must be off in half an hour."

Marion did miss her brother very much, notwithstanding her horticultural labors, for she had more time than usual to think, and she thought incessantly of her mother. Although, as a rule, she said but little to Edward on a subject in which she felt he could not naturally sympathize, the sad

thought of their estrangement cost her many a sleepless night and bitter tear, though gratitude to him kept her always cheerful in his presence. Now, however, that she was alone, she gave way to an unrestrained sorrow, much to the contempt of her maid, who informed the servant next door that her mistress "couldn't take on more if her young man had gone to sea, and all because her brother had gone away for a week." Ah, Golden-hair, you are not the first person whom the world has misjudged, or whose affairs have been canvassed over the garden wall.

The week had lengthened into a fortnight before a cab one evening drew up before the gate, and Marion, radiant with delight, once more welcomed Edward home. Again the little kettle sang, it seemed to Marion a dreamy song of expectation, as she watched her brother, who was making the viands disappear with wonderful celerity.

"And I now I suppose I may begin to talk to you," she exclaimed, as he laid down his knife and fork. "What do you think of Joe?"

"He is a capital fellow, and I have no doubt but that we shall eventually enter into an arrangement, perhaps after Christmas, but his father wishes him to travel a little on the continent first. Emily, I find, enters the convent in May. I suppose you know she is to be in London."

"No, I did not."

"Mrs. Darrell will bring her up, and they will stay with us for a week. It is to be expected she will take the veil about July, when the whole

family will come to town. After the ceremony, Joe and Edith will spend some little time with us, and when he starts on his tour, we shall go back with Edith to the Cedars."

"A very nice arrangement," said Marion; "I am so delighted that Emily is to come here."

"And now, Golden-hair," said her brother, "I have a strange piece of news for you."

"About whom?" she asked, with a faltering voice, for his manner half alarmed her.

"You must guess; but do not be afraid, it is nothing in any way tragical."

Marion did her best, and there was not an event likely or unlikely to transpire at the Cedars that she did not imagine.

"You are not near it," said her brother; "I will tell you this much, it has something to do with Father Stirling."

"He is going to leave Harleyford?"

"Not that I know of."

"Some one has left him a legacy?"

"No such luck."

"Edward!" cried Marion, suddenly, the blood rushing through her heart like a wave, "he is reconciled with Henry Lisle."

"No, dear, he is not. What a wild idea!"

Marion could not attempt another guess after that.

"He received somebody you know into the church last night—somebody you know and love."

"My dear old Turner?"

"No," said her brother, looking strangely at her; "somebody dearer still."

"Edward, my own darling brother!" she exclaimed, springing towards him with a low hysterical cry.

A deep and solemn silence reigned in the room, as she knelt before him, with her head upon his knee, while more than one tear fell down upon the golden ringlets—a silence broken only by the song of the little kettle, who sang in Marion's ears a "*Gloria in excelsis.*"

"This has been 'Keenan's' work," said Edward, when Marion was once more seated soberly *vis à-vis;* "at least it was your little book that first put the thought of going to Harleyford into my mind. Though I wanted to see Joe, my real intention was to see Father Stirling; but I would not say a word to you about it, for I was not at all sure, till yesterday morning, that I was convinced."

"And so Father Stirling received you. Is he not very much pleased?"

"I never saw any one look happier than he did when he bade me good-by at the coach this morning. Marion, of all the men I ever met, I never loved and admired one as I love and admire him. And to think, that not six months ago I abused him in his own house like a pickpocket. But it was his gentleness and forbearance on that occasion that first drew me to him. One seldom meets with a more magnificent character than his."

"And it seems to me that the greatest charm in that character is the way in which he adapts himself to the various spirits around him. A scientific man could not find a more congenial companion

than Father Stirling, and yet a child is at home with him in two minutes. He is truly 'all things to all men.'"

"He has been everything to me," said her brother.

Bright indeed were the blue eyes that evening, and long and earnest was the conversation that followed; he in the flush of his first enthusiasm, she no longer isolated in her faith and love. In spite of the shadow that her mother's alienation cast upon her life, the path of the future was not so dark, even amid that shadow. No more lonely walks to church, no more silence when the heart, full of some thought of beauty, longs to speak; but union in thought, and word, and deed, in all things.

"I shall go to Mass with you to-morrow morning," said Edward, as he bade her good-night at her chamber door. "Take care you do not forget to call me."

She did not forget, and as, side by side, they knelt at the Elevation, Golden-hair felt that truly this was the happiest moment of her life.

CHAPTER XXV.

"AND so you saw them off by the train, and left your mother brave to the last."

"Brave to the last!" repeated Joe Darrell, throwing himself into a chair by the open window of the little parlor at Streatham; "but I consider that we have all been cowards, except her."

"I do not see that," replied Edward; "it is no play-work to part with one of two sisters for life."

"It is not so much that, for of course, I know that her choice is a right one, and I feel sure she will be happy; but I cannot help thinking how she would have shone in the world. I could have given her willingly to a husband."

"But not to God."

"How sharp you are on a fellow! Remember, Ned, she was my favorite sister, my little *confidante*, and I cannot think what I shall do without her. Just suppose it were Marion, how would you feel?"

"Will you believe me if I say, that of all things I should most like to see her in a convent?"

"Now that is just because you are a red-hot convert, and nothing else. Tell the truth, would you not rather see her married?"

"No, indeed I would not, and that for many rea-

sons. First, nuns are always happy, which cannot be said of wives; secondly, the Spouse of the nun never changes, which earthly husbands do; and thirdly, the nun is provided for for life, which is not always the lot of the wife and mother in this world of change. The nun can never be widowed, never be led into extravagance; in short, the convent is safe, which married life is not. So you see, my dear Joe, leaving the high vocation out of the question, even my worldly prudence would rejoice if my sister entered a convent."

"Which I think she is very likely to do," said Joe, half savagely; "do not you?"

"About the most unlikely person I know. Marion likes the world too well to fly from it, and yet with too reasonable a love to fear it. So that in all probability she will remain in it, though I trust not of it, all her life."

"I wish Edith would get married," said Joe; "I do not want to have two of them nuns, I can tell you; however good it may be, as that reverend mother said, to have one's sisters always praying for one. I would much rather have them to talk to, if it's all the same to her. God bless my poor little Em, what shall I do without her!"

"Come, Joe," said his friend; "you are tired, and that makes you cross. Lie down on the sofa."

"Well, so I will till supper-time," replied Joe, suiting the action to the word. "Where are the girls?"

"Gone out for a stroll. The fact is, they are in rather an April mood; we had two showers over

tea. But they are not such heathens as you, their uppermost feeling is one of true pleasure when they think of Emily. It is strange though, that while they can talk calmly enough of her future, even should she be sent abroad, the very mention of this morning's ceremony melts them at once."

"And no wonder," cried Joe. "What on earth do they want to tantalize her friends for, by dressing a girl up like a bride, and making her look like an angel, before cutting off her hair, and making her a fright for life? I call it a refinement of cruelty."

"And I call you a heretic."

"Bother it, but I am not, though," cried Joe; "I'll answer for it, there never was a more out and out papist."

"And you cannot see the reason of the ceremonies used in a clothing?"

"Not a bit of it," replied his friend.

"Well, I have only my ideas to guide me, but it seems to me that of course it is a sacrifice, and it ought to be made in a solemn manner."

"Ah, as solemn as you like," cried Joe; "if they dressed her in deep black, I could then understand it."

"And where would then be the type of the spontaneous offering of her young life to God, or of the purity of the virgin heart about to unite itself to Him forever? What would those outside the Church say, think you, to such a doleful ceremonial as this?"

"I don't know; but not more than they say to

the bridal dress. I am sure it must give a girl far more distraction than if it were dispensed with."

"So it is in some Orders. But Joe, your argument might be used to every ornament employed in religious worship, until, having taken away all things beautiful, and consequently to a certain degree distracting, you brought us down to the four walls of the conventicle, and Brother Brown in the simple glories of his go-to-meeting superfine. Would that suit you?"

"I don't know," said Joe, "I'm asleep."

"The best thing for you," replied Edward; "so I will not try to convert you any longer."

He was soon once more deep in the book he had laid aside at his friend's entrance. After a time, however, the falling evening brought his reading to a close, and rising from his chair, he walked to the window. The movement aroused Joe to something between a groan and a yawn.

"Are you awake, Joe?" asked Edward, looking around.

"Humph!" said Joe.

"Do you not think the girls ought to be in?"

"Humph!" said Joe again, with a plunge that sent Marion's work-basket over on the ground, where it lay, a heap of melancholy confusion.

For another ten minutes there was silence, during which Edward looked out very pensively at the moon, just rising above the houses.

"How long have I been asleep?" asked Joe, suddenly.

"About an hour."

Joe again relapsed into silence, but not into sleep, for with his hands joined above his head, he lay and watched his friend, who was standing with his back to him.

"You have a nice little box here, Ned," he observed, at length.

"Yes, it always looks bright and cheerful, thanks to my home-fairy. Everything in the room is her work."

"She is indeed a home-fairy," cried Joe, kissing the edge of the anti-macassar.

"Joe!"

"Proceed."

"Did you mean what you said just now?"

"Don't know," returned Joe. "I say a good many things, but I seldom mean half. Do you mean what I said about poor Em?"

"No; about Edith."

"What did I say about her? I forget.

"That you would like to see her married."

"No; I don't want her to be married particularly, except to keep her out of a convent."

"Joe," said Edward again, after another pause.

"All right," replied his friend; "what's the matter?"

"I want to say something to you."

"Go ahead, old boy."

"I think you had better give her to me."

"What!" cried Joe, springing upright on the sofa; "you don't mean to say you—"

"Have been overturning my work-basket!" exclaimed Marion, opening the door. Only look,

Edie, at the litter these two boys have made. What have you been doing?"

"I don't know exactly," said Joe, who looked as if he spoke the truth, while Edward began gathering up tapes and cotton in his confusion.

"Ned, you clumsy fellow," cried Joe, who was shaking with laughter, "you are only making things worse. Shall I do it, Marion?"

"By way of improvement," cried Edith. "If Marion has any respect for her treasures she will not let either of you touch them."

"Yes, they may, because, if they prick their fingers with the pins, it will be a very just penance for upsetting it."

"Joe did it," cried Edward; "he went to sleep, and kicked it over in the fervor of his dreams."

"What did you dream about, Joe?" asked his sister.

"That a horrible old nun was going to cut my hair off, which I was determined to resist."

"Now, Joe, is that the truth?"

"Truth! of course it is! and what is more, I don't expect to dream anything else for a month to come."

"And what has Edward been doing?" asked Marion, laying her hand upon his arm, "dreaming, too?"

"I am afraid so, Golden-hair."

"A waking dream, I suppose," returned Marion.

"Not half so grand an institution as a sleeping one, I should think," said Joe; "but I suppose they are considered more romantic."

"Romantic!" cried Edith; "I question whether you know what the word means, Joe, you are so merely matter-of-fact."

"Give me your definition of the word first, sister mine."

Edith hesitated. "The spirit of the beautiful," she answered, shyly.

"Now, Ned, what say you?"

"The innate poetry of a prosy world."

"Marion."

"I do not know."

"Nonsense; a young lady without a definition of the word romantic! Impossible!"

"It is true, Joe; though when I was younger I was very fond of thinking and talking about it."

"Give us the result of those juvenile cogitations, then."

"Well, it used to seem to me that romance was the blossom, and reality the actual fruit of life."

"Not a bad one, for the blossom fades to make way for the fruit, and I am sure romance gives place to reality as we grow old."

"Now, Joe, give us your idea of romance," cried Edward.

"A slice of cold mutton and a glass of ale for reality, the romance you shall have after supper, for the fact is, I am waxing hungry."

"Poor fellow!" exclaimed Edward, ringing the bell.

Marion hurried out to give certain little private directions, and Edith, who was wonderfully interested in her companion's ménage, followed her.

"What say you to a turn for five minutes?" asked Edward, "while they lay the supper cloth."

"Capital!" exclaimed Joe; "just what I was going to propose."

It was a calm quiet evening, such a one as closes in a sultry August day; a freshening breeze rustled the leaves in the pretty gardens as they passed along, and the last rays of the setting sun poured a refulgent stream of gold and crimson across the horizon. Both gentlemen walked on for some time in silence, for the theme of their interrupted conversation was still uppermost in their thoughts.

"Ned," exclaimed his companion, at length, "do you really mean to say you like Edith?"

"I do, and have done so from the first moment I saw her."

"Shall I tell you a secret?"

"She is already engaged!" cried Edward, catching his breath convulsively.

"No; something far brighter for you than that, Ned, my poor dear old fellow; Edie likes you."

"How do you know?" asked Edward, stopping short in his energy.

"By a thousand little things I myself should never have discovered, but which poor Em noticed, and told me of, as one of her greatest troubles, for she thought you far too clever and learned to bestow a thought on our quiet little Edie. She, of course, poor child, has never suspected that her secret has been read."

"But your father, Joe, what would he say, for she might, I have no doubt, make a better match."

"About a month ago he told me that, could he fashion a husband after his own heart for either of his girls, he should choose no higher standard than Edward Howard. So it seems that in this case, in spite of the old adage, the course of true love does run smooth. Well, Ned, I must say the idea of a brother-in-law has sometimes rather bothered me, but now the case is altogether different. This is a kind of set-off against this morning's business. Poor Em! I would put up with something uncommonly stiff in a brother-in-law though, to get her out in the world again."

"Now, Joe," cried his friend, "don't get cross about that again. Very little reflection will soon put that straight for you. Of course it seems hard at first, but you will cease to regret it, the very first time you see her bright face in the convent parlor."

"Through a grating," cried Joe.

"Through a grating, and why not? Is that much to put up with for the love of God?"

"Not for a saint like you, perhaps; but very much for an ordinary every-day sort of a fellow like me."

"Nonsense, Joe. You are fifty times better than I am. You have little idea what a convert is, with his miserable doubts and fears. You have always been my beau-ideal of a young Catholic Englishman; so don't be scandalizing me now."

"Ah, Ned, you do not know all I have had to bear. You have told me something about my sister, now I will tell you an o'er true tale about

yours." In a few words Joe told him of Marion's rejection of his suit. "And this," said he, "is a trouble that has not passed away; my heart is as true to her as ever, and mine to-day is a strangely mingled sorrow, for I have met my sweet little sister again, to part with her for life, and I can see in Marion's eye, after an absence of two years, the same fatal glance of sisterly affection. Ned, my dear boy, there is no chance for me, is there?"

"None, I fear," said Edward, in a voice husky with emotion.

"I thought not; indeed, I may say I knew there was not. And yet, Edward, night and day I never forget her, and I think I could die just to see one little flush on her cheek when I meet her. Yet that wretched Lisle can give her up with his bigoted stupidity. I do not believe he really cares for her."

"Yes, he does, for I saw a letter the other day that he wrote to his sister, when Marion first became a Catholic. He has been very intolerant, very; but there has been something very noble in the way in which he has sacrificed affection to principle."

"I cannot say I see it," replied Joe; "but don't you think she will outgrow her fancy for him?"

"Never. Joe, I would give you hope if I could, but it would be cruel to deceive you. Marion's is a true woman's heart, and her love for Henry Lisle will only cease with death."

Once more they relapsed into a silence which was not broken till they stood before the garden gate.

"Ours has been but a poor exchange, Joe," said Edward, pausing, with his hand on the handle, and

looking sympathetically at his friend. "You have made me the happiest of men, while I have only deepened a wound for you."

"Can't be helped, old fellow. Besides, it's only what I knew before. I cannot imagine how I can be such a fool, as to stand crying over spilt milk. I know she will never like me, and I can't think what I have come here for, except to make myself miserable by looking at her, like an old cat at a bird in a cage. But, somehow I couldn't help doing so, though I made a dozen resolutions to go straight back to Harleyford after the clothing, instead of coming to see you. Do you know, Ned, I sometimes wish that she was married, for while there's life there's hope; and, while there's a gleam of hope, I shall never be fit for anything. Will you answer me one question candidly?"

"If I can."

"Do you think, if Marion had never known that young parson, she would have liked me?"

"That is a difficult question, Joe; what can I say?"

"The truth, to be sure."

"And make you more miserable?"

"Then you think she never could, in any case, have fancied me?"

"On the contrary, were her affections free, you are, I believe, just the wild dashing spirit that would have captivated her. But is this idea a consolation to you? It would be just the reverse to me."

"Yes, it is. It is a consolation to me to flatter

myself that there is anything in me that, under other circumstances, might have won her. Perhaps, of all men, a sailor, who, by his very profession, is left to brood and dream, who is led across the wild waters by the pole-star, and directed by the fragile finger of a compass on his course; he, perhaps, of all men, knows most truly what is the value of a woman's heart. But, perhaps, Ned, it is better as it is, for I sometimes think if Marion had loved me, I should have ceased to look for heaven."

"My poor, dear fellow, no, that you never would," cried Edward, in whose eyes heavy tears were standing. "But cheer up, you will find some one much prettier and more clever than my little sister. I shall live to see you with a sweet little wife even yet."

"No, that I swear you never shall. By George! Prettier and more clever than his sister! I wonder the words didn't choke him. You ought to have said better while you were about it."

"Well, come in now, and let us have some supper; I am afraid you forget you are hungry."

"It is not the first supper the thought of her has spoiled, nor will it be the last. I sometimes think, Ned, I shall have to give up the idea of the partnership business; it would bring me too much into contact with her."

"We shall see; you will be stronger in both mind and body after your tour. Have you quite made up your mind to start to-morrow?"

"Quite," said Joe, as they passed into the house.

Not one member of the little party was in good spirits. The exciting scene of the morning had rather unstrung them all, and the conversation of the two young men had not passed over without a saddening effect on both. Before the conclusion of the meal, however, both had in some measure recovered themselves, and cheerfulness once more resumed its sway with all.

"Play us something," said Edward, and the girls sang the familiar duets and the same sweet ballads that had so echoed through the old house at the Cedars. One or two were laid by, almost reverently; they could not even open them, for the voice that had borne its part in them could not be replaced by another. Could they, with the moon, have penetrated the chapel in the enclosure at this very instant, so bright a face smiled beneath the novice's veil, that they would sing her songs in very joy at her happiness, while she sings the matins and lauds to the glory of her God.

"Joe, will you come and sing 'All's Well,' with Marion?"

Poor boy! It was hard to sing such a lay as that, with his heavy heart. But Joe Darrell seldom thought of himself, and he moved directly to the piano, and took Edith's place.

"I hope we shall not make such a blunder as we did that evening at Mr. Seymour's. Do you remember it?" asked Marion, laughing.

Did he remember it! Was not each event of that night burned into his brain?

They sang it very nicely. Old as was the song,

and simple as was Marion's untrained voice, there was yet a charm in the duet that would have pleased many a lover of better music; but Edward and Edith must have been more than stoical, for the conclusion of the song actually found them talking. It was some little time before they seemed even to be aware that the music ceased.

"It would not be polite, I suppose," exclaimed Joe, "to talk of pearls before"—

A laugh from Marion aroused them to a sense of their shortcoming.

"Thank you," said Edward, starting, and pulling a leaf, not half withered, off his favorite geranium, "very well sang, indeed."

"Beautiful!" added Edith.

"It is a lovely night," observed Edward, opening the French window. "Would you girls be afraid of a walk around the garden?"

"There is nothing I would like better," said Edith. "It is just what Joe and I do every evening at home. Will you come, Marion?"

"Of course she will," replied Edward, offering Edith his arm; "come, let us set them the example."

Joe rose, but he did not follow them. He only took up one of the duets that had been laid aside, and read it until the notes and words danced before his eyes.

"Poor Em!" he ejaculated, laying it down with a very heavy sigh.

The words awoke a slumbering thought in Marion's heart, and they talked of the little nun

for half an hour. He, seated, with his hands resting on the piano, looking at her profile; she dreamily playing strange wild running chords; but the words that fell among the notes were sweet and soothing, and while Edward and his companion walked around and around the grass-plot, till they ought to have been giddy, Marion talked to Joe of his sister, and tried to show him how weak it was to murmur at the will of God.

"But I cannot help it, Marion."

"Yes, you can. When I was but a little child, studying with mamma, there sometimes came a lesson that I felt as if I could not learn. As she never excused it, I sat down with a full determination of conquering the difficulty, and I did so, for there are some of those lessons I could repeat even now. So it is with resignation. It is, indeed, a lesson hard to learn but; say once, with a mighty effort, 'Thy will be done,' and, believe me, you will never retract the words."

"Do you speak from experience?"

"I do—from bitter experience. I have had hard and heavy trials, Joe."

"I know it, Marion, and pity you from my very heart. Except this morning's business, I have never had but one, and that one has nearly crushed me. I never have been, never shall be, resigned to that."

"Yes, you will; whatever that trial may be, you will bear it patiently, if you only try."

"Impossible, Marion, I have tried, but it is of no use."

"You have tried in your own strength, and failed."

"That is true. My own strength is all that I have had to trust to, for my trouble, from its very nature, must be borne alone."

"Do not say so, Joe; if it is really a trouble, it has been already carried up Calvary. Like the Cyrenian, you have only helped to carry the cross."

"It is of no use talking to me like that, Marion," cried Joe, almost pettishly, "when its weary weight is on me day and night. And it will never be lighter till you speak one word."

She turned and looked at him with an eye so full of sympathy and sorrow, that for an instant he was mistaken.

"Is it possible, Marion!" he exclaimed, leaning forward and snatching her hand from the keys; "is there a hope for me?"

"Joe, dear Joe!" she cried, gently extricating her hand from his grasp, "why will you not let me look upon you, think of you, love you, as I do Edward? Believe me, this I do; more is not mine to give. I am unchanged, and unchangeable."

She arose as she spoke, at the same instant Edward and Edith entered from the garden, and five minutes later the two girls were up stairs in Marion's room.

Neither spoke for full ten minutes after the door had been locked, but each seemed busy with her own thoughts. Edith radiant with smiles,

combing out her long black hair, and Marion arranging a drawer of house linen. At length, however, the latter turned from her task, and the looking-glass revealed the smiling face, and its wonderful expression.

"Edie, darling, what is it?" asked Golden-hair, laying a hand on each shoulder. In an instant Edith had turned, and was sobbing in her arms.

"Why, what a funny child you are! What an April day! You were laughing just this minute. Are you thinking of Emily? I am your little sister now, remember!"

"So he says," whispered Edith.

"Who?"

Another sob was the answer, and then the truth flashed on Marion.

"Edie! My darling! What, has Edward—"

"Hush! Marion, do hush!"

But she saw how it was, and, with a long, fond kiss, welcomed her new sister to her heart of hearts.

"Joe," said his companion, some few minutes after the girls had returned, and turning to that young gentleman, who, extended upon the sofa, was fast becoming misty in the smoke of his own cigar, "had I not better write to your father?"

"Yes, but to make things quite sure, you had better speak to Edie first, I think."

"Bless the fellow! Why, Joe, I should have thought you might have guessed that that piece of business had been managed already!"

"What a blockhead I am, to be sure! I recollect

now how you came in from the garden, she like a wet pink rose, and you, for all the world, like a peony that couldn't hold its head up. If I had not been thinking of something else, I should have wondered what was the matter with you."

"I will tell you of what I have been thinking, Joe," continued his friend, "and that is, that I will wait till the girls go to Harleyford next week, before I say anything. I could not leave town very well just now for long, but I will run up with them, and make everything straight and smooth with your father then."

"Very well, do; but be sure to write and tell me what the governor says, and all that sort of thing. Why, Ned, I expect he will quite come the patriarch on the occasion."

"How long do you think you will stay abroad, Joe?"

"Till I recover my senses. Don't laugh, I really mean what I say. I am going in downright earnest to study resignation."

"God bless you, my poor dear fellow, and make the hard lesson easy."

"Amen," said Joe; "now shall we go to bed?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

"THERE! didn't I say so, Mr. Howard? Didn't I say so, deary? Didn't I say I should live to see my own child hanging on her brother's arm?" And old Turner's dim gray eyes almost sparkled again in their glee.

"Ah, yes, you were a truer prophetess then, than I gave you credit for, old lady; but look, you ought to have foretold the two while you were about it, for you see, I have a pair of arms and a lady to each."

"To be sure you have. Two good, strong, stout arms, like your father's. God rest the poor gentleman. And now tell me, Mr. Edward, what do you think yourself, could they be better filled?"

"No, that they could not," said Edward, glancing alternately at his white and red rose.

"That they could not," repeated the old woman, slowly; "but there's one sweet face I miss to-night, and shall have to miss, I'm afeard, for many a long day, for I suppose we're never like to hear Miss Emily's sweet voice, nor see her heartsome smile again. Poor dear! Well, they may say what they like, but I don't understand them there sort o' things at all."

"She is very happy, nursey," said Marion; "we all three went to see her last night, and she looked as bright as a queen."

Turner shook her head.

"O, but she did, though, really," continued Marion; "and sent her love to you, and said I was to ask you to take care of her geraniums next winter."

"Did she now?" cried Turner; "to be sure I will take care of them. She's not obliged to stop, is she, Miss Marion?"

"Not at all; she can come out any moment she likes for the next twelve months."

"Then we shall have her with us again, even yet, for all as is come and gone."

"Is that a prophecy, Turner?" asked Edith.

"No, no, Miss Edie; because, as I said just now, I don't know nothing about these sort o' things. I only mean, I hope as how she won't stop. I beg your pardon, Miss Edith, but when is Mr. Joe coming back?"

"I do not know, Turner—why?"

"Because I miss his merry, bright face about here, and because I think, too, that Mr. Edward would be better if he had one arm to himself, like. Two's company, you know, Miss Marion, and three is none."

"Quite true, nursey," replied Marion, laughing; "so suppose I stop here with you."

"Indeed, you will do no such thing," cried Edward, magnanimously detaining her, while a little flush ran over Edith's happy face. "What a mischievous little mortal you are!"

"Mischievous! Just because I want to do what you and Edie would like better than anything in the world, if you dared say so. Look how nursey is laughing! She is mischievous, if you like. We shall have another prophecy directly. Will you stop and hear it? What are you thinking about, Turner?"

"Something that makes my old heart very happy, deary, and if you will stop a bit with me, and let Mr. Edward and Miss Edith go on, I will tell you all about it."

"Now, I am jealous!" cried Edward, looking, however, anything but displeased, as his sister bounded from his arm into the little cottage. "Well, if she will go, we cannot help it," he added, pressing his companion's arm very slightly. "I dare say we shall be able to amuse ourselves." So saying, he closed the gate, and five minutes later saw them rambling through the prettiest lane in Harleyford.

"And so my own pet has come back to the old woman, fresh and blooming as a rosebud," cried Turner, flinging her arms around her baby of other days. "I did sometimes fear, when I thought of you all across the seas, that I should never live to see this blessed day. But here you are, safe and sound, thanks be to God, and just the same as ever."

Marion only replied by a French kiss, again and again repeated. Then a chair was pulled out and dusted, though Marion refused even to look at it till the old woman was in her usual corner. But

when both were fairly seated, there followed such a tale on the one side, of France, the French school, Miss Tubbler, and last, not least, of the pretty little home at Streatham; and on the other, of Edward's arrival and illness, Emily's departure, and all the events, past and present, at the Cedars, that the twilight was deepening fast before Marion thought of moving.

"Must you go yet, deary? Won't you wait for Miss Edie and your brother?"

"Well, yes; I suppose I had better do so, nursey. They will not be long now, I should think."

"I shouldn't think so," said the old woman, "but I don't know; young people holds time with butter-fingers, you know, deary, 'specially sometimes," she added, smiling.

"What are you looking so merry about, nursey?" asked Marion.

"Just my own thoughts, Miss Marion. I was thinking how very happy Mr. Edward seemed, as he turned to shut the gate. Ah, deary, we shall be having the church bells ringing before long, I'm thinking. Well, they be made for one another, that they be!"

"What has put such a funny idea as that into your head, granny?"

"Just my own two eyes, child, that saw this same thing afore ever Mr. Edward went over to bring you. There is only one thing, deary, that makes me quake, like, when I see them so happy together."

"What is that?" asked Marion, nervously.

"Miss Edith's cough, dear. O, but it goes right through me, that it does."

"But only when she has a cold."

"Well, it may be so, and I do hope I shall live to see her Mr. Edward's wife, but I feel afeard when I hear it. Poor Miss Emily used to worrit herself very much about it, because, you know, Miss Marion, there is consumption in the family, Betsy tells me."

"Well, Turner, we are all in the hands of God."

"So we be, deary," returned the old woman.

"Besides, it seems hard," continued Marion, "to think of this to-day. I know I may tell you, nursey, because I always look upon you as my second mother. It was only this morning that Edward asked Mr. Darrell's consent, and this is the first day of their engagement."

"Is it, though?" exclaimed the old woman, with a glistening eye; "may God bless them, then, and spare them to one another for many, many years. Aye, deary, but everything looks bright to young folks when they're keeping company, it's a time they look back upon with light hearts, even when they are old and gray. Them two will never forget this evening in all their lives, Miss Marion, that they won't. God bless them forever, I say."

"Amen," arose from the heart of her little visitor, who had risen and was standing in the porch amongst the pink roses, "for ever and ever."

The old woman also stepped out to water her flower-beds, too intent upon her task to speak for a few minutes, and Golden-hair looked at the setting

sun, and dreamed. Of what? The sunset was bright, but the reverie was very shadowy. It was a mingled dream, too, of a mother's kiss so long unknown, of a few words once spoken in the library at the Cedars, of her grandmother, and the dreary French school. Was that all? Was there not also one little thought that the "home fairy" might not perhaps be what she had been, that the married might not be brother Edward still? Sweet little Golden-hair. The heart that smiled that welcome to the truants was not a very jealous one.

"A goodly parcel of letters!" exclaimed Mr. Darrell, as he emptied the post-bag at the breakfast table the next morning. "Behold," and he held up a budget of all shapes and sizes. "One from Joe to me, and one from Joe to you," tossing the letter in question to Edward. "One from little Em," he added, laying it almost reverently beside the mother; "another for Marion; the rest, I can see, a parcel of rubbish about farming and farm matters, to be opened as time and convenience shall suit."

"Emily writes on behalf of Mother Abbess," said Mrs. Darrell; "she says she is as happy as the day is long. I should like a Protestant to read that letter. It is business-like, merry, and yet pious as a sermon, at one and the same time."

"May I read it, mamma?" asked Edith.

"Certainly, dear, and answer it, too, if you like. Do you think you will be able to think of any news to tell her?"

The smile that ran around the table made Edith glad to take refuge in Emily's letter. Edward, too, became very deeply interested in his.

"Joe talks of stopping for some weeks in Paris," said Mr. Darrell; "he seems to like his companions very well on the whole."

"Yes, and of going from thence to Switzerland, and of ascending Mont Blanc," observed Edward.

"Hope he will enjoy it," said Mr. Darrell. "Silly boy, to waste his breath and shoe-leather for the pleasure of getting above the clouds, into a little deep snow. Never could see the fun of that sort of thing myself. What is the matter, Marion?"

He might well ask; she had laid her letter down with such a strange expression on her face.

"Mr. Darrell!"

"Miss Howard!"

"It is from Mrs. Gordon; you remember my writing to you about her, do you not?"

"Perfectly: you mean the lady who went to the Bermudas."

"Yes. Well, I will read you her letter," and it was with a flushed cheek that she commenced.

"'What have you thought, dearest child, of all the letters I have lately written you, so truly congratulating you on your brother's arrival and affection, so studiously silent about myself, in spite of your many questions? Marion, I would not tell you anything, when I could not tell you all. I would not weary you with my doubts and fears, and I had nothing else, peculiar to myself, to

speak of. But the case is altered now; the blindness of Saul has passed away, I believe. Marion, my sweet little sister in sorrow and heart, we are sisters now in faith. I will tell you no more, for I am about to return to London, my health being nearly reëstablished; and then, face to face, you shall hear all. All the strange by-paths and tortuous ways through which the truth has followed my flying steps, until, like the jailer of Philippi, I have cried, amid the flashing of God's own light, and the rending of prison bars, what must I do to be saved? What will my brother say? I must not, will not, care. In a letter I received from him a few days since, he said he thought of spending a few months on the continent to recruit his health and spirits, which are, I fear, poor fellow, at a very low ebb."

The voice of the little reader began to fail, and she passed the letter to Mrs. Darrell.

"There is nothing more of any consequence," she observed; "but has it not been a wonderful conversion, she was so very determined?"

"*Gloria in excelsis Deo!*" cried Mr. Darrell. "Marion, you must show that letter to Father Stirling."

"He will, indeed, be pleased," said Mrs. Darrell; "she is a very old friend of his."

"Yes, I will take him the letter after we have seen Edward off this morning," said Marion.

"Can you not stop a day or two longer with us, Ned?" inquired Mr. Darrell, while from Edie's eyes also there stole a very pleading little glance.

"Indeed, I fear I must not do so; there are one or two gentlemen I have promised to see this very afternoon, and business must be attended to, you know. More than ever, now," he added, with a proud, bright smile, "I have a double reason for trying to make my fortune as soon as possible."

Edith and Marion smiled, and, breakfast being over, passed with Mrs. Darrell through the window out upon the lawn.

"And you will succeed, Edward," said Mr. Darrell, as soon as they were alone; "you will succeed. The man who could give up inclination for business never went to the wall yet. Mark my words, Ned, my boy, you will get on bravely in the world."

"I have such a bright, guiding star," replied Edward, "I can well understand Jacob's fourteen years of servitude, if Rachel was only half what Edie is. What do you think of the partnership now?"

"We must see how Joe comes back. There seems to be, I am happy to say, a more settled tone in his last letter. He talks in it of the future, something like a man of business."

"He will do well enough in a little time, you will see," remarked Edward, soothingly.

"I wish he were more like you," replied the father.

"You forget he is a few years younger. Joe will come out yet quite to your satisfaction, I know."

"Then it will have to be in the firm of Howard & Darrell."

"We shall have even that, if we have patience, and God thus wills it."

"I trust so, most sincerely, my dear boy," cried Mr. Darrell, warmly shaking his young friend's hand. "I should be very happy in the idea that both my children's lives were linked with yours. But, *allons*," he added, rising; "do you think you have time to come and look at the threshing-machine that was set up yesterday in the lower barn? It is on quite a new principle, and I should like to hear what you think of it."

"Plenty of time; though, with regard to my opinion, machinery is a subject on which I am more interested than wise. But I should very much like to see it."

After half an hour's very learned conversation on flails, fly-wheels, cylinders, and horse-power, and another of very sad, and somewhat very sentimental *adieux*, Edward was on his road back to London. Shorly after his departure, Marion was standing with a letter in her hand, waiting for the presbytery door to be opened.

"I am very sorry, Miss, but the Father is out. He went away on horseback directly after breakfast, and told me he could not say whether he should be back to dinner or not. He said, if you called, I was to tell you he would try to get up to the Cedars this evening to see you."

"Thank you, Martha; how is your rheumatism?"

"Much about the same. Do you know, Miss

Howard, but I am very glad to see you in these parts again? It seems a very long time since you were here."

"More than a year and a half, and everything seems to have been standing still during my absence, for I see no alteration in anything, except Eliza's boys' at the Lodge, and that old Turner seems a little infirm."

"We must expect that, Miss, at her age; but she's a good old creature. It's a pity but what she was a Catholic."

"She is very happy as she is, and loves God so truly, that I do not fear for her. It seems a strange thing, perhaps, but, much as I love her, I care less for her conversion than that of any one else that I know. I look upon her as God's own ignorant, happy child, to whom, for reasons of His own, He has never yet shown the full light of His truth. But He may speak to her even at the eleventh hour; should He do so, rely upon it, old Turner will do His bidding. I am sorry Father Stirling is not at home. We were out a great deal yesterday, and Mrs. Darrell would not let me be called for Mass. But when my brother saw Father Stirling this morning early, he did not say he was going out."

"No, Miss; it was a letter that came by post that took him off. What a pity Mr. Howard couldn't stay a little longer, the country air would have done him good."

"Yes, he has made a very short visit this time, for we only came up the day before yesterday."

"The Father was out all day yesterday, too?"

"So he sent us word yesterday morning, we were all very much disappointed, as it was my brother's only day at the Cedars. If you will give me a sheet of paper, I will write a note to Father Stirling with this letter, and I shall be very glad if you will give them to him as soon as he comes in."

"Certainly," replied Martha, leading the way into the familiar little parlor, when it was some minutes before Marion could collect her thoughts to write, every object around her was so fraught with old associations.

"May I go through to the church?" asked Marion, as she gave her letter into Martha's charge.

"To be sure, Miss," and Marion passed through the little arched door, and knelt before the altar. She had been distracted over her letter, but she was not so now, for the thoughts that crowded around her, were woven into her prayer. The past, with her mother and Henry Lisle; the present, bright with Edward's happiness and Mrs. Gordon's conversion, and the yielded mysterious future. "Thy will be done," said Golden-hair, bowing her head, and placing that future in the hands of God. Nor was poor Joe forgotten in his deep requited love, nor the little nun in her solemn, difficult life of inward joy. All were remembered in a long, deep prayer, but the first and last words of that prayer were "my mother." Shall the prayer be heard? Shall the bright curls nestle once again upon her mother's heart? Patience, Golden-hair,

be it so or not, remember, "God does all things well." She did remember it, and passed out of the chapel with a strong heart and firm foot.

"It will seem very strange when Edward is married," ran her soliloquy, as she walked home. "I am afraid I shall sometimes feel rather in the way, as I did last night, and then I shall have no nursey to talk to. Of course, too, I shall not keep his house, nor make his tea, nor do anything else that I do now. Well, I shall soon get used to it I suppose. At any rate, I must make Edie think that I like to have nothing of the kind to do, or she will feel herself a supplanter, and that would make me very unhappy. How fond Edward is of her, and well may he be; and yet, somehow, though I love her so much myself, I cannot bear the idea of any one being dearer to him than I am." At this point in her soliloquy, Marion was walking down a very narrow lane, and, in spite of herself, a salt tear would trickle down. "What am I doing?" she exclaimed, stopping suddenly short in her walk; "crying because Edward is so happy! Why, I do believe I am jealous, jealous of dear Edie." And, ashamed of her weakness, Marion turned precipitately to other thoughts, and half arranged the wedding, by the time she arrived at the Cedars.

Father Stirling was late home that evening, so late, that Martha walked more than once to the little green gate, with an uncomfortable recollection uppermost in her mind, of a certain picnic, and its disastrous termination. Bright as usual, he came at last, though very much fatigued.

"I am afraid your dinner is half spoilt, Father, but I don't know, for I have done all I could to keep it nice and hot for you."

"I am sorry you should have taken so much trouble, Martha, for I have dined; but, I will tell you what you may do, just run over with it to old Biddy while it is hot. She does not often get a good dinner, or supper either, poor creature, I am afraid, for she looked so pale and thin just now, as I passed her, sitting at the door."

"O, but Father, what am I to give you for your supper if I am to send this away," objected the housekeeper, "for I'll be bound, notwithstanding your dinner, you're half famished after your ride?"

"Have you an egg in the house?"

"Yes," said Martha, discontentedly, "but I don't feel any way sure they're fresh, for you sent off all the new laid ones we had to William Dobson last night, and I can't keep you waiting till I go up to the farm."

"Never mind, run over to old Biddy at once, and then come back and get me a cup of tea; and, notwithstanding your suspicions concerning the eggs, I think I will venture on a couple."

"Did ever any one see the likes of him!" exclaimed Martha, as soon as she arrived in her domain, and had begun arranging the tempting little dinner in a basin for Biddy. "I believe, if he had any one else but me to look after him, he would be starved to skin and bone. But I will go up to the farm, for if I break my neck for it, he can't eat musty eggs while I'm in the house."

Left to himself, Father Stirling began to think, and, to judge by the smile upon his face, his thoughts were very bright ones, as he leaned back in his arm-chair, playing an imaginary accordeon on the tips of his fingers. Presently Marion's note caught his eye, and, breaking the seal, Mrs. Gordon's letter fluttered to the ground. With a calm eye and unmoved brow, he read the ecstatic effusion of the woman, that had been to him in early days what he only knew, and a strange glad look passed over his face. But that was all, and quietly refolding the letter, the priest rose from his seat, and walking into the chapel, sought his constant refuge in his joys and sorrows, in his usual place before the altar.

Very calmly and warmly did Father Stirling that night congratulate Marion on the conversion of her friend, when he joined the cheerful party at the Cedars, but not a shadow less simply than he spoke of Edward's reception into the Church.

"Is it wrong to wish it had been her brother instead?" asked Mrs. Darrell, aside, as Marion took her seat by Edith, on the opposite side of the room.

"Of course it is, my dear friend, very wrong. Conversions are not human achievements, and to entertain such a wish, is to say to God, 'What doest Thou?' and that, you know, we must not say."

"But would it not be delightful if he could be brought to see the error of his ways?"

"To be sure it would, and so perhaps he will, in

God's own time. But we must beware how we sit in judgment on the decrees of Providence. Fifteen years ago I prayed very hard for the instant conversion of this very lady, but now I thank God, from the depths of my heart, that he did not then grant my prayer. And yet, apparently, there was every reason to suppose that such an event would be in accordance with the Divine Will. Even now, Henry Lisle's conversion may be a thing predestined in the infinite wisdom of God, but there are two hearts He may see good to try first in the crucible of affliction. Do you not think so?"

"Yes I do, Marion Howard's troubles have given a tone to her character."

"They have done more, for they have shown her the fragility of earthly happiness, and have taught her to make heaven her treasure-house. They have taught her patience and resignation, and given her a yearning after the path of perfection—a path difficult to distinguish when the blossoms of worldly prosperity grow rank and luxuriant. God grant she may follow it!"

"And Mr. Lisle, father—what has his trouble done for him?"

"Taught him to suffer! Given him, perhaps, part of a weary purgatory here! If it had not been good for him to be afflicted, his road would still have wound on amid pleasant places. Stay, Miss Howard is coming to speak to you."

The conversation now became general, but as the evening wore on, Father Stirling seemed

wonderfully pre-occupied, and fidgeted from one place to another like a spirit of unrest.

"It seems like old times to have Marion here again," exclaimed Edith.

"Yes, and any one can see that she is not sorry to find herself once more amongst you."

"That indeed she is not," replied Marion.

"There have been many changes since her arrival here with Joe, that cold winter's evening," said Mrs. Darrell, musingly.

"There have indeed," replied the priest.

The little party grew silent with their own thoughts, the mother of her children, Edie of Edward, while Marion's ideas were a conglomeration of the reveries of the rest.

"Will you be very jealous if I ask Miss Howard to take a turn or two with me around the garden before it gets dark?" asked Father Stirling.

"Well, considering how long it is since you saw her, I do not think we shall, so you may monopolize her for half an hour. Am I not generous?"

"I never knew Mrs. Darrell anything else," replied the priest, smiling.

"Thank you," exclaimed the lady; "but I am afraid even Father Stirling was polite then at the expense of truth!"

It was not until they found themselves in the very green alley, that had been the scene of Marion's childish conversation with him about the Catholic Sunday, that Father Stirling broke silence.

"Do you not wonder, my child, what I want you for?"

"Rather," replied Marion.

"Do you remember our last ride together?"

"Of course I do; neither of us could easily forget it, I should imagine."

"Would you be afraid to trust yourself to my charioteership again?"

"No, not at all."

"Well, I think the journey I wish to take you to-morrow, would be worth even a broken head or arm."

"A journey! Where to?" asked Marion, opening her eyes very wide.

"Not far. To a little village a few miles off, that you have not seen for some time. Will you go?"

Marion looked at him without speaking.

"Come, you do not answer, so I shall conclude that silence gives consent."

"Father Stirling, what do you mean?"

"What do I mean? Why, my dear child, that to-morrow morning, directly after breakfast, I shall call around for you in old Jackson's gig, to drive with me to Ennington!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

IT was a scene of life and gayety, brightness and bustle, with the autumn sun shining redly on the red leaves, and the water sparkling and flashing in his beams. O, the Bois de Boulogne! Who, who knows Paris does not know it, with its broad roads and gilded gates, its clear lakes and verdant lawns, its waving woods and tortuous by-paths, its art and nature so magically blended, that one cannot say which is the true charm of the scene? And who, who loves Paris, does not love it, with its flowers and swans, its picturesque islands and falling cascades, its morning chats and rambles, its mid-day drives and state, its evening *fêtes* and merriment?* How often has the Englishman, fairly wearied with lion hunting, sunk with a sigh of relief into one of its cane-worked chairs, glad for a while to rest on his oars, as he cons his guide book, or thinks over his day's wanderings in peace! And this was exactly what two Englishmen were doing on a certain September afternoon.

It would have been impossible to mistake them for anything but what they were—two genuine

* It need hardly be said that the above was written before the cruel devastations of the late war.

sons of Britain, "doing Paris" desperately. No one would certainly have set them down as Frenchmen, even had Murray been out of sight. There was, however, evidently no desire on their part to disclaim their nationality, for they were talking animated English, much to the amusement of an old lady, "*en bonnet*," seated on the next chair.

"And so you are beginning to get tired of Paris?" remarked the younger of the two, a fine handsome young fellow, with merry black eyes, and dark complexion, rendered still darker by exposure to the sun. "I cannot understand that at all; I call it no end of a place!"

The other smiled. He had seen more summers than his companion, and it seemed as though much of his interest in life had passed with its earlier years. His manners were grave and quiet, but his clerical garb made the gravity not unsuitable. The smile excited by the remark of the other soon faded, and a rather melancholy shadow took its usual place upon his brow.

"I am not surprised at your idea of it," he remarked, after a pause. "I can fancy that those who can appreciate its gayeties find Paris a perfect Elysium. As for me, though I can understand its charms, they do not suit me."

"Do you not like this?" asked the other, pointing to the animated scene around them.

"Of course I do, and many things besides; but usually speaking, Paris grieves and shocks me."

The other glanced instinctively at the closed vest. "May I ask if you have been here long?"

"About a week, and as I am making a tour for my health, I do not suppose I shall stay much longer. I have not yet decided whether to go on from here to Switzerland, or up the Rhine."

"I am going to Switzerland," replied the other. "The idea of its mountains is to me a most bewitching one, for though I have traversed many thousands of miles in voyages from London to Sydney, and from Sydney to London, I seem to have seen but little of the really grand scenery of the world. But your temperament is, I should imagine, very different to mine, and I can well fancy that Germany would suit you better than glaciers and mountain passes. Yours is, I am sure, just the nature to appreciate the sweet-storied Rhine, with its ruined castles and luxuriant vineyards—you like dreamland, I know, and one must keep one's eyes uncomfortably wide open in walking along the precipices of the great St. Bernard. But that is just the sort of thing I like. Now, tell me if I am not right in my estimate of you."

"Yes—no. Mine is a dreamy nature, but I never dream, for it is a waste of time, and dangerous. I am thoroughly matter-of-fact."

"Not as much as you think. Perhaps you would be surprised if I told you that it was the enthusiastic look of admiration you bestowed upon that beautiulf glimpse of scenery at St. Cloud, that first made me wish to speak to you. That look told me that you had a soul 'Murray,' that you were an Englishman, while everything else was guaranteed by the garb of the English clergyman."

"I am very glad you did speak to me," replied the other, "for I had been wishing for a companion all day. I have been in a great measure alone during my stay here, for though I have letters of introduction, I have not felt exactly in spirits to make use of them;" and the speaker sighed heavily. "With the exception of an old college friend of mine, a clergyman residing here, I have hardly spoken to any one."

"And how do you get on with this most barbarous lingo?"

"As to that, I can manage pretty well. I was at school for some time in the provinces."

"More than I can. I nearly send the old garçon into a fit half a dozen times a day, though he is polite enough to get black in the face rather than grin. I am afraid I shall be the death of him from apoplexy some day." And the young fellow laughed till the tears came, at the recollection of his various blunders.

It was some time before they left their seats, and the longer they chatted the more animated they grew. The naïveté with which his young companion descanted upon everything that had fallen under his notice during his sojourn in France considerably amused the clergyman. He almost felt his own boyish days return, as he listened to an account of the mad-cap frolics and escapades of the not many years emancipated school boy. But there was a tone of thought and deeper feeling, wonderfully perceptible in the young man's observations, when the under-current of his nature

was stirred, that gave his graver companion a great desire to know more of him whom chance had thus made the companion of the passing hour. The young man, on his side, was quite as favorably impressed with his new friend. Weary of the companions of his tour, youths that love of adventure had led into the wild revelry of the Quartier Latin, and among the students of the *Ecole de Medecine*, he had gradually weaned himself from their party, and promising to overtake them on their road, had suffered them to depart without him. All this, in the natural frankness of his disposition, he told his new companion.

"You have quite made up your mind, then, to go on to Switzerland, I presume," remarked the clergyman.

"Not irrevocably, though those fellows are expecting me, even now, I know."

"If you take my advice, you will not go. You do not care much for them, I can see."

"Candidly, I do not; the fact is, they are too fast for me. Even those of the party that seemed very rational at first, are as bad now, if not worse, than the rest."

"So much for bad example; you had better not go after them."

"I have more than half a mind not to do so. I was rather upset about one or two little matters before leaving England, and I long to be quiet. Otherwise, I confess, I should have got on with my friends much better; but, somehow, I cannot exactly enter into all that sort of thing just now.

I should thoroughly enjoy a quiet party of two or three; or even one friend to travel with, would suit me very well."

"You would not care for the company of a dull old fellow like me, or we might go up the Rhine together."

"There is nothing I should like better," cried the other; "we should get on bravely together."

"Then be it so," said the clergyman, rising; "but it is getting chilly now, and I think we had better move on. This is truly a pretty scene," he continued, turning to take a last look at the gay groups. "I have been very pleased, too, by my visit of this morning to St. Cloud. There is something to my taste very beautiful in that heavy palace, sleeping, as it were, among its stately trees and verdant alleys. That and the grand old Versailles are among the few things I care for here."

"Do you not like the Tuileries?"

"Yes, I do. But there is an air of deep repose that especially charms me at Versailles and St. Cloud. I suppose you will smile if I say I like the dreaminess of the alleys and silent water-works."

"Have you not seen the waters play?"

"No, and am not likely to see them, since they tell me it will have to be by the desecration of the Sabbath. Abominable!" he exclaimed, striking his foot vehemently, as though denouncing Paris, and Parisian impieties forever.

"The country around Paris is very pretty,"

observed his companion, as they continued their walk.

"To a certain degree, but it in no way equals the scenery surrounding London. You will search vainly here for the beauties of Richmond and Petersham. The woods of Meudon are well enough, but along what a flat, dreary scene of desolate looking fields and vineyards you must pass, to reach it from Paris. How different from the pretty villa-dotted roads that lead out in all directions from our metropolis. A man, to my thinking, must be Paris-mad who can for an instant compare it with our grand old London. Take her altogether," he continued, "England is a beautiful little country. The castles of the Rhine, and the glaciers of Switzerland, may be all very well, but the charm of English scenery lies in something deeper and dearer still. Although she is now so populous that her large towns intersect her like a mighty network, there is yet room for isolated villages and broad estates, and though she stands highest on the pinnacle of science and discovery, the charms of her little villages are still intact. Railways intersect her like a web, factories pour forth their marvellous floods of wealth, mines probe deep into her bosom, but the country lanes of dear old England wind on just as peacefully beneath their arching bows, in these days of steam, telegraphs, and bustle, as they did in the times of stage coaches, highwaymen, and silence. There is a little village where I once lived, that cannot boast a single charm of scenery; its river is a simple

millstream, its hills and valleys are the gentle undulations of the chalk, and yet I know no sweeter spot on earth than that, with its peaceful cottages, its old gray church and thick, luxuriant trees. I do not suppose you ever heard of Ennington."

"Ennington!" replied the other, with a sudden glow of pleasure, "yes, I know it very well."

"Indeed. I was curate there till within the last two years."

Had a thunderbolt fallen at his feet, Joe Darrell could not have looked more utterly confounded.

"Is it long since you were there?" asked the other, not remarking his companion's emotion.

"No;—yes;—some time since," replied Joe, absently, who was thinking of the Christmas eve when he had brought Marion to the Cedars.

"Do you know any one living there?"

"No," replied Joe, who did not feel inclined to reckon Mrs. Howard among his acquaintances.

"Only a passing visit, I see," replied the other.

"Do you?" thought Joe. "Yes," he added aloud, and with some bitterness in his voice; "I went there on a commission for my sister. It was winter time, but I remember I thought it a very pretty little place."

He remembered, too, that he had thought very little about it, but very much of a flood of golden ringlets, swaying in the wind beside him; and falling every minute more deeply into his reminiscences, he walked on in silence. Perhaps his companion was thinking of golden ringlets, too, for he

also became silent, and full a quarter of a mile was traversed before they again exchanged a syllable.

As the slanting sunbeam cast the shadow of his rival across his very path, Joe Darrell might well be silent, for he felt that rival's power, and if a single hope, in spite of all that had come and gone, still lingered in his heart, it melted at this moment like frostwork before the sun. One glance at the calm majestic brow beside him, and he read the iron destiny that had separated him for ever from the woman of his choice. He was vanquished; he knew it, felt it, but half the pain subsided as he gazed upon his rival. If he had become so strangely interested in him by one hour's conversation on indifferent subjects, what must be the devotion of the child's heart that had ripened into womanhood under his influence! For the first time he realized what Marion's sacrifice had been, and the halo with which his affection had encircled her, grew brighter as he gazed. It was a farewell glance, and the last gleam of the sunshine of his youth faded that evening, as the sunbeams set on Paris. But a strange determination arose in his breast, springing phœnix like from the embers of his boyish love, and as his companion walked on still silently beside him, laying his hand upon the crucifix that rested on his heart, Joe Darrell made a vow. Not a vow of vengeance, gentle reader. Amid the mixed feelings with which he stepped on beside his rival, admiration perhaps was paramount. Not of misanthropy—Joe Darrell loved all men with a deep large love. Not of celibacy for

Marion's sake—the possibility of loving another never crossed his mind. What, then, was his vow? An echo from the days of chivalry, a faint whisper from the desert, and its silent self-devotion.

"A thousand barriers divide her from me, one only separates her from him, and I will strain every nerve to tear it down. For God's sake, for Marion's sake, I will labor for his conversion."

Like oil upon the troubled waters of the sea, the waves of passion gradually subsided, and while his new resolution quivered at his heart, Joe Darrell walked on his way, with a kindling eye and smiling lip, in perfect peace.

As they passed the barrier with its gilded rails, the sun was just sinking below the horizon.

"I feel loath to see him go," said the clergyman, "for on what will he rise to-morrow?"

Joe looked up inquiringly.

"What do you think of Parisian Sundays?" asked the other.

"Many things," replied Joe; "I both like and dislike them."

"More than I can say," answered his companion, "for to me they are positively awful. Were it not that I could not conscientiously waste the day God has given us for Himself, I would willingly sleep it by, and spare myself the grief of witnessing such wholesale desecration as Paris will to-morrow present. What do you think of the open shops, and various occupations going on on all sides?"

"I think it very wrong."

"And what do you think of the theatres and

public gardens, sending forth their strains of music on this sacred day, syren like, decoying men to their destruction?"

"I think them worse still."

"And what do you think of the gadding about in every direction, of the open Louvre, and other places of a similar nature? Of a party of young people positively playing at ball and other games, as I saw them last Sunday in the Tuileries garden, as I passed through, on my road home from the church, in the Rue d' Aguesseau?"

"I think it very right."

"You think it very right!"

"Yes, indeed I do. I think that minds bent for six days over mental or manual labor, require a little unbending on the seventh. I know that 'the Sabbath was made for man,' and I am an advocate for rational amusements upon it. Shut up the shops, stop work, take away everything that bears with it a trace of sin, and I love what remains of the sprightliness and gayety of a Sunday in Paris, more than I can say. I am quite in my element amongst it all."

"You are! Then I must say I am greatly disappointed in you. To me, the universal profanation is sickening. One might say, that the great heart of Paris never beats to one thought of God."

"Many unjust things not only might be said, but are said," replied Joe.

"Pardon me, my dear young friend, but this would not be unjust. Last Sunday I attended the morning service in the Oratoire; there were a few

worshippers, certainly, but what are they amongst such a population as this?"

"Not much," replied Joe, smiling, in spite of himself.

"No," continued the other, "not much, indeed; merely a handful of wheat among a weary waste of tares; and the other churches, they tell me, are no better attended. One Sunday afternoon I went to the Protestant church at Grenelle, and found a room that would be discreditable as a school in a populous district of England, and such a miserable congregation; I came away truly sick at heart. And yet, except these little bands of faithful ones, scattered here and there through the length and breadth of Paris, the whole mass of this great city is steeped in utter supineness."

"About what?" asked Joe, opening his eyes.

"About their immortal souls. Why, where is their religion?" he asked, seeing Joe looked perfectly aghast.

"Where is their religion?" he repeated; "where all religion ought to be, before their minds, on their lips, in their hearts. You have seen much in Paris, but you seem to have overlooked one item, and that is her churches. All day long on Sunday these are more or less crowded, and even during the week the Masses are well attended. For the Catholic religion is no Sunday garment, but is worn all days alike, suits all hearts alike, saves all souls alike. The work done in Paris on the Sunday is without an excuse, a remnant of Voltaire's handiwork, a relic of the revolution; but believe

me, there are those who do not sanctify the Sunday less with prayer, and praise and good works, because they have brethren who openly profane it. Really, you do not understand what this religion is!"

"Yes, I do," replied the other, bitterly; "understand it to my cost; understand it in all the foulness, blackness, dreadfulness of its deceptions and iniquity! Of all men living, few know Popery better than I do, for few men have suffered more from her machinations. I am truly sorry to find a bright, intelligent young Englishman like you, vindicate her. Keep away from her enticements, my dear young friend, for, believe me, she is enticing! Do not, I charge you, by the living God, let the glitter of a few candles lead you astray from Him, into the shadow of error, where He is not, never has been, and never can come!" He paused, and looked at his young companion.

Joe smiled. "I can well understand, that, thinking as you do, you are surprised at my vindication of Catholicism, but, before we go a step further on our road, or in our friendship, let me tell you one thing. Do not be startled, but, by the grace of God, I am what I am, and that is a Catholic."

They walked on in silence, broken at length by the clergyman.

"I am, of course, sorry to hear this; indeed, I am deeply disappointed. One thing, however, as we journey on together—will you promise me not to shrink from religious conversation?"

"I will, but on one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you, on your part, do not inveigh against my religion as you did just now, but that you let me explain it thoroughly to you, instead."

The other hesitated.

"Are you afraid?" asked Joe, rather mischievously.

"No; and I promise to hear all you have to say, with as much patience as I can muster. I certainly give you full and free permission to make a convert of me if you can."

"That I could never do," replied Joe; "for conversions, like rain, fall down from heaven. But I shall pray very hard for you."

The other looked strangely at him. So practical a religion in a young man of the world, was rather new to him.

"You are a strange mixture," he observed, looking up quietly, after a short pause.

"How so?" asked Joe.

"In every way. You have the heart of a boy with the head of a man, for you convulse me one moment with an account of your mad-cap escapades, and talk the next of giving up the company of your fellow-tourists, because they are too fast for you. And after revelling in the idea of what I, at least, call Sabbath desecration, you speak, not ten minutes after, with a solemnity I have rarely seen, even in the most serious young persons of your age."

Joe laughed, and, pointing out the figures on the Pont d' Iéna, changed the conversation.

"To-morrow I will shift my quarters, and come over to you," said Joe, as he shook hands with his new friend at the door of his hotel.

"Will you not come in and rest?"

"No, thank you, I am expecting some letters of importance, that I shall have to answer to-night."

"Do you know that we have not yet exchanged cards?" asked the other.

Joe wrote his first two names, Joseph Fortescue, on a leaf torn from his pocket-book, and received in exchange the card of the "Rev. Henry Lisle."

He knew very well what name the little card would bear, and yet he almost started as it lay in black and white before him. But stifling the rising feeling, and laying his hand once more upon his crucifix, he pronounced his vow again, and walked briskly to his hotel.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FATHER STIRLING'S surmise had been a true one. Cold though she was, Mrs. Howard had left Ennington, because it had been too much for her. She had loved Marion more deeply than anything on earth, except her pride, and her cottage home, with its associations, were more than she could bear. She had, therefore, tried change of scene, and having, as we have already seen, let her house, had passed the following year at Clifton. But, irrespectively of the annoyance she received from her unprincipled tenants, Mrs. Howard soon found that this would not do. Too cold to excite interest in strangers, too reserved to seek new friends, too indifferent to wish to please those with whom chance associated her, hers was a lonely life. Her pride, for which she had sacrificed the sunshine of her existence, she found but a poor substitute for happiness, although she hugged it to her heart, intrenching herself, every day, more strongly in her determination.

At last, her year of exile having terminated, she returned to her own home in the early spring. The renovation was hard work, but Dr. Stebbing's recipe of soap and water, applied by Sally's strong

arms, soon made all things bright, and, before long, the white curtains once again shaded the windows, the garden was restored, and even Tyrza grew half civilized. But it was in vain that Mrs. Howard tried to banish once more, among old pursuits and familiar faces, the sad thoughts that fresh scenes had failed to dispel; and as she arranged the long-neglected rooms, and walked in the garden among its spring flowers, she missed the sunny face and busy fingers more than ever.

"And yet, I know that I am acting rightly," ran her frequent reverie; "my relations say so, and surely, of all living people, my sister Isabel is good. I make no profession, but she, at least, is a religious woman, (for one hardly ever hears her talk of anything else), and she says I have only acted as she would have done in my place. I wonder where Marion is; but I feel easy about her, for I know, even if she has left the Cedars, Mrs. Darrell will keep her eye upon her. Perhaps she has gone to her grandmother; if so, the old lady will be only too glad of an opportunity of poisoning her mind against me, I know; but I must make up my mind to every kind of misrepresentation now, and re . content with the assurance of having done my duty."

At this moment a sudden gust of wind fluttered her cap ribbons far behind her.

"I shall catch cold if I stay here any longer," she exclaimed, shivering, and so she passed into the house, and wandered slowly from room to room, unconsciously seeking some distraction for her

thoughts. Presently, a letter-rack, Marion's handiwork as a child, caught her eye.

She unlooped it from the wall, and a rare store of bills and papers she turned out, deposited by her late tenants, and, to her surprise, at the bottom of all, a letter addressed to herself, and bearing the date of the previous October. It fell from her hands before she had fully perused it, for it was Mr. Twidgett's letter, announcing, in lawyer-like style, the death of her mother-in law.

"Dead! Mrs. Howard dead! Impossible!"

A pang of remorse shot through her heart. She felt miserable, wretched, and began to wish that she, too, was dead and buried in that quiet corner of Ennington churchyard, which her husband had chosen for the grave he was destined never to rest in. With this thought, too, there came another—what would that husband say, from his place of unquiet sepulchre beneath the deep waters, could he see how his aged mother had been neglected by her, whose slightest wish had been his law? Mrs. Howard burst into the first flood of tears she had shed in all her troubles. Pride, as usual, tried to whisper consolation, but in vain, and the haughty spirit sobbed on, unchecked in its agony.

She was only beginning to grow calm, when a sharp rap at the door announced a visitor. It was answered before she could interfere.

"Is Mrs. Howard in?"

"Yes, sir," and Dr. Stebbing was ushered into the drawing-room.

"What a nuisance!" exclaimed the lady, looking

at her reflection in the mirror, with great dissatisfaction; "how can I go to speak to him, such a fright as this? I must bathe my eyes and see what that will do."

Notwithstanding her ablutions, however, her face bore evident marks of her late emotion, when she entered the drawing-room, and could she have known it, somewhat raised her in the estimation of her visitor. He began to think there was even yet a healthy spot in the warped and contracted heart, and his greeting was consequently a shade or two warmer than it would otherwise have been.

"I should have called on you before," he remarked, after the usual salutations; "but both Mrs. Stebbing and myself concluded that you would not care to receive visitors during the first week or two of your return."

"Well, I really have been very busy," she replied, "for the house was in a dreadful condition."

"So we could see from the outside."

"Nothing would induce me to try the experiment of letting it in a similar way again, although I might be more fortunate another time, for I appear to have come in contact with unusually disagreeable people. I have just discovered that they did not even trouble themselves to forward me a letter that arrived last autumn, for I have, this afternoon, found it at the bottom of an old card-rack. Unfortunately, too, the letter was both important and painful, for it was one announcing the death of my mother-in-law, from her lawyer in London. It has given me a severe shock."

"You did not know it, then, until to-day?"

"Of course not; there was no chance of my doing so. This lawyer was the only one connected with Mrs. Howard who knew my address; perhaps, even of my very existence; for, with the exception of Marion and her half-brother in India, the poor old lady was the last of her family. I wonder what has become of her little property. Her annuity, of course, ceased with her, but she has many valuable family heirlooms, and, wrong as Marion has been, I should like her to have what has been left to her in the will, if only for the sake of keeping them in my poor husband's family. Edward, too, ought to have been written to, though," she added, striving to appear indifferent; "I do not see why I should trouble my head about it."

"Especially as everything was arranged long ago by Major Howard," replied the doctor.

"What do you mean?" she asked, looking at him in blank astonishment.

"Simply this, my dear madam, that the property of the deceased lady is already in possession of the rightful heirs, who have not long since transferred it from Islington to Streatham, where they are now residing."

"The rightful heirs! I do not understand you; there are, I know, no nearer claimants to Mrs. Howard's property than Marion and her brother."

"Who are the persons named in that lady's will, and who are precisely the people in possession of her effects at Streatham."

Mrs. Howard began to think of cases when

hereditary madness had broken out suddenly, but the doctor had never looked more sane in his life.

"In plain words, my dear madam," he exclaimed, "do you know where your daughter is?"

"No, Doctor Stebbing, I do not; though I should think, most probably, with her friends at Harleyford, if one can apply the term to those who have so wretchedly misguided her."

"You are mistaken," replied the doctor; "she is not there, but, after having gone through many troubles, she has found a haven of refuge in this very brother Edward. He has taken a house in Streatham, and she is with him. And now, I suppose, you are wondering where I have gleaned all my information, and so I must tell you what happened in this quiet little village of Ennington, about the end of last October. I was one afternoon walking slowly home from the schools to dinner, when I saw this very house door closed most unceremoniously upon a gentleman, who had evidently been making some inquiries. You are perhaps aware, Mrs. Howard, that though curiosity certainly had its birth in Mother Eve, it has not by any means been thenceforth confined to her sex; and as I had seen this gentleman alight from the coach a few minutes before, and had been somewhat struck by his appearance, I was, I must say, a little curious about him. I certainly did not feel less so, when I saw him stand melancholy and perplexed, looking up and down the street, with the evening fast closing in. I was quite gratified when I saw that he had made up his mind to speak to

me, and you may imagine my surprise, when after very few preliminaries, he told me that he was Edward Howard. He said he had only just arrived from India, to find his grandmother dead, and you and his sister gone he knew not whither; for Miss Smith informed him that she had burned your address, and did not remember it. Poor fellow, I never saw such a picture of despair, till I invited him home with me to dinner, and promised to tell him all I knew of his sweet little sister."

Mrs. Howard frowned.

"O, I can tell you, I did not spare you," continued the old gentleman, smiling kindly, and polishing his bald forehead. "Whatever my friend Lisle may have said to the matter, my opinion has been unchanged throughout the whole affair. You have done wrong, and acted very harshly. Marion has been misled; but I cannot see that she has committed a fault, for she has only exercised the proudest boast of our Church, that is to say, the right of private judgment. Having been biassed by stronger minds than her own, she may have erred in this judgment, but I have not a single doubt, that a little judicious management would have eradicated the error in a very short time. Why, even upon Lisle's own admission, she was slightly touched some five or six years ago, see how she came around then. But you have defeated your own end, for I sadly fear Marion Howard will never return to us now, and I do not speak without a foundation for my words.

But, I suppose, you are thinking that all this is very impertinent, and has nothing to do with my story."

Mrs. Howard smiled in spite of herself.

"The Major stayed all night with us," continued the doctor, "and I procured Mrs. Darrell's address for him from the old Catholic cobbler here, for he refused to write to you, or hold any communication with you, on the subject of his sister."

"So much the better," interrupted his auditor.

"Well, whether for better or worse, so it was. The next morning he took a post-chaise to Harleyford, and I never saw nor heard anything more of him until about a week before Christmas, when he suddenly made his appearance. He then told me that he had been taken seriously ill at Harleyford, that he had been, in fact, almost at death's door, that he owed his recovery in a great measure to the kindness of Mr. Darrell's family, and to the Catholic priest of the place, and that he was then on the point of starting for Paris, to bring his sister."

"To Paris! You do not mean to say that Marion has been living in Paris?"

"That she most certainly has," replied the rector; "for her brother says, she could not be induced to remain either at the Cedars, or with her grandmother, and so she took a situation in a French school as English teacher, where she remained until last Christmas. But I wonder Mr. Lisle has not told you this, for the last time I saw your step-son, he told me that while in

London, Marion had become acquainted with his sister, Mrs. Gordon, who is now, however, in the Bermudas for her health."

"How strange, that Mrs. Gordon should never have mentioned this to her brother; though now I remember, she wrote rather decidedly to him about his angry feeling with regard to Marion, remarkably so, I thought, for one who had not seen her brother for years, and who was, as I supposed, a total stranger to the young lady in question. May I ask when you last saw Edward?"

"The very day you did."

"I do not understand you," replied Mrs. Howard.

"You remember the flying visit you paid to Ennington, about a month since, when your friends did not even know you had been, till you had again taken wing?"

"Yes; I only remained two hours here, and that was spent in talking to my tenants to no purpose, and then I returned by the evening coach to London."

"Do you remember who were your companions, coming up?"

"Let me see. Old Grimble, and Mrs. Greaves, the butcher's wife. I do not remember any one else: stay—yes, there was a gentleman also, quite a stranger to me."

"Who was no other than Edward Howard; he stayed all night with me before going on to Harleyford, whither he was bound. I never knew that you had been travelling companions, until I heard

quite by chance of your angel visit to Ennington, when I remembered Major Howard speaking of a lady, who had alighted in our village, 'the best read woman he had ever met.' I only wish I had known it was you, I would soon have enlightened him."

Mrs. Howard remained silent with astonishment. She now remembered perfectly well the dark-eyed gentlemanly stranger, whose manners and appearance had greatly prepossessed her, and the little piece of admiration so naturally expressed by Edward, and so neatly thrown in by the rector, was not without its effect. She began to think her step-son might turn out a much more agreeable person than she had ever imagined such an appendage could possibly be.

"He told me of a strange piece of business, in a note I had from him a few days after his return to London, after that very visit here."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, it seems that during his week's stay at Harleyford he was received into the Catholic Church. I have written him a long letter on the subject, though with a very vain hope of it in any way influencing him, for he seems very earnest in the step he has taken. This is why I said just now, I fear Miss Howard will never change again; this conversion will, of course, help to intrench her in her new opinions."

Mrs. Howard made no reply, and the kind-hearted rector seized the opportunity of her silence, and tried once again his powers of eloquence, to

induce her to relent in favor of her child. Finding, however, that his arguments produced no effect, although Mrs. Howard seemed too much stunned to attempt to combat them, he rose to take his leave.

"One thing I have to ask of you," said the lady, as she wished him good-by, "and that is, that you will not mention to Edward Howard that he and I have already met."

"Certainly not, if you do not wish me to do so," replied the clergyman, "but I am quite disappointed. I should have liked to enlighten him on the subject of his fellow-traveller."

"But you must not do so, if you please, for I do not wish to be brought before him and Marion in any way. She wishes to forget me—let her do so!"

"My dear madam," cried Dr. Stebbing, "how mistaken you are! her brother tells me that he believes she pines for you day and night!"

"Let her come back to me then," replied the mother; "the conditions are not hard!"

No, Mrs. Howard, not hard, but simply impossible! Dr. Stebbing did not say this though, dear reader, for he did not think so. He only took up his hat and Malacca cane, and, with a courteous adieu, walked briskly home to his wife, who was waiting dinner.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE snowdrops and crocuses had faded away in the cottage garden in Ennington, and again the summer roses were blooming red and bright in their stead. Once more the new-mown hay perfumed the meadow-lands, once more the haymaker's song mingled with the murmur of the mill-stream and the droning of the mill, and once again the bees, birds, and butterflies were winging their way through the golden sunshine.

Bright, however, as were the summer days, they were little heeded by Mrs. Howard. Like Ezechias, she had "turned her face to the wall," as the shadow of death fell on her soul, and in untold bitterness of heart she gazed into his face and trembled. She was very ill, very lonely, very desolate, for Dr. Stebbing and his little wife, who would have tended her so kindly, were away on their summer trip. Even little Miss Leicester would have been useful now, but she was in Bath, dancing attendance on an aged aunt, who ought to have died, for the benefit of her nephews and nieces, at least ten years before. There was no one left in Ennington but the new curate, and he was so awkward and boyish, that the very thought

of him fretted the invalid. And so the days dragged on; old Mr. Bernard her only visitor, and Sally, nurse and sole companion.

For a long time she had been lying very still, planning ways in which the pattern of her curtains might have been better joined, and Sally, who had mistaken her silence for sleep, was rather startled when her mistress exclaimed abruptly, "I wish you could write, Sally."

"Laws, ma'am, so do I."

"Just give me my desk, and I will try and write a few words to Mrs. Dampier myself. I cannot bear this isolation any longer. It is killing me."

The desk was brought, but the pen was hardly between her fingers, before the invalid sank back exhausted.

"There! take it away," she said, faintly, "I must get Mr. Bernard to write for me."

And yet before that gentleman arrived, the plan had been discarded, as the vision of her prim serious sister floated before her mind. "She would only worry me, and make me more melancholy still," was her conclusion, "and I should shock her if I did not let Mr. Mason visit me every day, though I really think I will send for him to-morrow, if Dr. Bernard says I am no better; but I know I shall not like him," she added, petulantly, shedding tears in her weakness.

The next day found her even worse, and Sally was despatched for Mr. Mason, for though Mrs. Howard did not exactly imagine herself in danger, a strange unwonted gloominess made her long for

spiritual consolation, and brought the thought of Henry Lisle many times before her.

Mr. Mason was a quiet, gentle, meek young man, whose want of firmness and energy was fast letting everything in the parish, that was under his immediate care, go wrong. He walked into the invalid's room, looking very warm, and feeling very uncomfortable, for this was his first curacy. His ministrations were precisely such as might have been expected. Weakly and timidly he talked of resignation, and stammered out something about repentance, heaven, and the judgment to come; but though she listened like Felix, unlike him Mrs. Howard did not tremble, but in her untamed pride, only blushed to think that such a spirit as hers should have sought consolation from such a mind as his. In about ten minutes he left the house, never to return, and Mrs. Howard, closing her eyes, lay still, and brooded once more over the dull mental pain, that his visit had by no means helped to allay.

When Mr. Bernard made his call the following day, he shook his head. No wonder. Was his patient likely to improve, while the very thoughts that had laid her low, still hovered around her like spectres? She was very much worse, and poor Sally, her patient nurse, looked white and wearied with watching.

"Go to bed just to-night, Sally," said Mrs. Howard, in a tone she had never from her childhood used before to a servant. "Go to bed, and let little Polly come and stay with me."

"No, thank you, ma'am, I would rather be here," and in two minutes the country girl was stretched on her mattress by her mistress's bed. And now as through the silent watches of the night she lay restlessly awake, listening to the breathing of her weary nurse, Mrs. Howard thought, as she had never done before—thought of her life as it was lying that night, written word after word in the solemn Book of God—not a syllable blotted out of the handwriting against her. For though in the village church she had bowed her head with others at the general confession, where had been her repentance?—though she had said with the rest of the congregation, "I believe in God," where had been her faith? As though a veil had been withdrawn, the utter weakness of her cause in the sight of God lay plainly before her now, and she shuddered as she thought of death.

"Not yet! not yet!" she cried. "O! my God, give me time for repentance, time to live to know Thee, time to learn to welcome death, as they tell me Christians welcome it for Thy sake."

Sally was fairly puzzled when she arranged her mistress early in the morning, for she could not determine whether she was better or worse. The old doctor himself looked almost equally nonplussed, and shook his head more vigorously than ever, all the way home.

"Sally," said Mrs. Howard, after his departure, "I should very much like to have some one in to help you."

"There is no need," said Sally, half hurt.

"Yes, but indeed there is. You will be getting ill too, and I do not know how Polly would manage with both of us on her hands at once."

"I feel all right as yet," said Sally, "and I'm sure there's no one about here, as you'd like to have with you."

"No, therefore I shall have to send to London for a nurse."

"Just as you like, ma'am," replied Sally, crossly, "I only know I am very well as we are."

"I want somebody to go to Harleyford for me to-day, how could it be managed?"

"Very well, if Polly could mind you; because I could go myself."

"You! Why how would you get there?"

"Walk."

"What, all the way?"

"To be sure. Unless somebody passed in a shay, and would give me a lift."

"I could not think of such a thing!"

"Do you think you could manage for a few hours with Polly, ma'am? that's the question."

"Yes, very well indeed; but you must not go, you are not strong enough to walk to Harleyford in such weather as this, to say nothing of getting back again."

"I shall try," said Sally, grinning, and marching out of the room.

It is very pleasant to drive or ride through country lanes on a warm summer day, but vastly different to toil through them on foot for nine

long, weary, dusty miles. By the time poor Sally, with aching feet and glowing face, had arrived within a mile of Harleyford, she felt very much exhausted, and her stout heart began to consider in some dismay, how the journey back again was to be accomplished. She, however, plodded resolutely on, and at length, by dint of much inquiry, found herself before the presbytery door, and a few minutes later, for the first time in her life, actually in the presence of a real, live Roman Catholic priest.

"Well, and what can I do for you, my child?" asked Father Stirling, kindly, as Martha ushered her into the study. "You are a stranger, I see. Sit down—not in that draught though," he added, rising, and placing a chair on the other side of the window. "There, that will do. Are you a Catholic?" he asked, as he resumed his seat.

"Laws, no, sir!" cried Sally, startled altogether out of her propriety. "I never even heard of such a thing till lately."

Father Stirling laughed. "I see—I beg your pardon. Go on."

"My mistress told me to tell you," answered Sally, who felt rather confounded, "that she would have written if she thought I could not make you understand, sir. She would like to see you—that is, if it's convenient."

Father Stirling looked somewhat perplexed. "Stop a minute, my child, and take your time, for I cannot make much out of that. Where do you come from?"

"From Ennington, sir."

"From Ennington! How did you get here?"

"I walked, sir."

"Why, you must be half dead. Who is your mistress?"

"Mrs. Howard."

"Who?" exclaimed the priest, who began to think he had fallen asleep over his office, and was still dreaming.

Sally repeated the name.

"Tell me again what she has sent you for."

"To ask you to go and see her, if you possibly can. She is very ill, indeed, sir. Mr. Mason, the minister, had to be brought yesterday, so you may think she's pretty bad. She tried very hard to write, but she almost fainted over the note, so she said you must excuse a message instead."

"To be sure, to be sure. Yes, I will come directly. What is her illness, do you know?"

"She caught cold, sir, and wouldn't nurse herself, all as ever I could do. But I think it's more because she worrits herself so. She has never been the same since—"

"Since when?"

"Well, I don't know that it's manners to say anything about it to you, sir, but she's never been the same since Miss Marion went and turned."

"I suppose not," said the priest, half to himself.

"No, indeed, she has not, and no wonder. I'm a quietish sort of girl, and I say very little to anybody, but I have my feelings, sir, and I find the house awful dull without her."

"Have you lived long with Mrs. Howard?"

"Eight years, sir. Miss Marion was a little girl when I first came to Ennington, and seeing her grow up, as one may say, before my very eyes, it was no wonder as I missed her when she didn't come back. But it wasn't any business of mine, and this is the first word I have ever said about it, and I shouldn't now, only I want you to do good to my poor missus. But please, sir, don't—"

"Don't what?"

"Why, sir, don't make her a Papisher too!"

"Why not?"

"Because—because it seems so dreadful to do the things they do!"

"Does it?" asked Father Stirling, looking very much amused, and rising to ring the bell. "Now my, child, I will tell you how we will manage. You shall go with Martha into the kitchen and get some dinner, and then I will drive you back. Just send me in a crust of bread and cheese," he added, turning to the housekeeper; "let some one run over to Mr. Jackson, and ask him to let me have the gig; and be as quick as you can in everything, for this is a sick call, and I am in a hurry."

Sally felt very thankful as she sped over the miles between Harleyford and Ennington in the old-fashioned gig, even though her companion was a priest, and the end of her mission to bring him to the bedside of her sick mistress. Now that she had a little leisure to think, she was on the point of commencing a few speculations on the curious

turn events seemed to be taking, when her cogitations were cut short by Father Stirling himself.

"And so," he exclaimed suddenly, "Catholics do such dreadful things, do they?"

Sally hung down her head, but at the same time smiled an affirmative.

"And what do you think is the worst thing they do?"

"I don't know, sir," she replied, hesitating; "worship idols, I should think."

"You never mean to say you believe Catholics do that, my good girl!" cried the priest, almost letting the reins fall in his surprise.

"Yes, sir, I thought they did! Of course there was a bit of a stir in the place when it got out that Miss Marion had gone and turned, and I asked Farmer Grimble what Catholics did, that was so dreadful, and he told me that they worshipped idols, confessed all the sins they had ever committed, or were going to commit, to a priest, and that they starved themselves sometimes almost to death, because then they thought they were sure to get to heaven."

"And you thought this rather a peculiar creed, I suppose! No wonder."

"What, sir?"

"You thought these were curious things to believe?"

"To be sure I did," replied Sally, smiling.

"Well, child, very little of all that Farmer Grimble told you is true; he is quite mistaken, poor man. We neither worship idols, starve our-

selves, nor confess the sins we are going to commit; all this is sheer nonsense! But we certainly confess the sins we have committed, and feel very happy afterwards. You would not like to have to do that, I suppose?"

"Laws, no sir! I shouldn't know which end to begin at."

The priest smiled kindly, and whistled on his horse.

"Why," continued his little companion, "the Bible says, 'Our sins are more in number than the hairs of our head,' and how could I ever recollect them?"

Father Stirling replied by explaining in a few simple words the true doctrine of the Church, and though very far from convincing her of the authenticity of his religion, her last remark, as she sprang from the gig at her mistress' door, was to the effect, that, the very next time she saw Farmer Grimble, she would tell him to look before he leaped, and not to talk of things he didn't understand. "And yet I always thought, somehow, Miss Marion couldn't have come to worship idols, that I did!"

It was with mingled emotions that the priest entered the chamber of the invalid, and certainly, among them all, surprise was not the least prominent, for had the Reverend Adolphus Gardiner offered him the hand of fellowship, he could not have been more astounded than at Mrs. Howard's message. He found her propped up with pillows, very weak and careworn, though lighted up as her face now was, by a flush of expectation, and by

the strange bright look it had worn all day, there was that in her appearance that wonderfully interested him.

Sally having placed a chair for the priest, and withdrawn, silence ensued, for a few moments broken at length by the lady.

"I hardly know how to apologize, Mr. Stirling, for bringing you all these miles, but I have a very particular question to ask you. I could not write it, for I am so very weak, and somehow—" here her voice failed, "I could not bring my mind to let my servant ask it."

"And there was no occasion for her to do so! Rest assured, my dear madam, that the drive of to-day has been only a pleasant excursion. Priests, like doctors, are accustomed to sick calls, and I have walked miles in the dead of the night, before this."

"But this can hardly be considered a 'sick call,'" replied Mrs. Howard, "for I will be candid, and tell you at once, that I am as firm a Protestant as ever. I do not want to see you professionally."

He rather winced at the term, but only bowed in reply.

"You will be astonished at my question, I know," continued the lady, "but I lay awake all last night, and determined to ask it, for I do not think I shall ever get well again."

"We must hope for the best," replied the priest, soothingly. "I see no reason why you should not. This very warm weather is against you now; when

it passes you will have a better chance of recovering your strength. You seem to me very low, does your medical man permit you to receive visitors?"

"I have never asked him," replied the invalid, smiling, "for the simple reason that I have no one to visit me. I have only three or four friends residing here, and during the whole of my illness they have been from home. I have seen no one all the time but Mr. Bernard, my doctor, and Mr. Mason, the curate, once."

"Only once!"

"Yes, and that was yesterday; but I found him so thoroughly uninteresting that I could do nothing with him. I did not ask him to call again. An overgrown school-boy, and nothing else!"

Father Stirling looked very grave. "And have you no one else to offer you spiritual consolation in this weary illness?"

"No one; I must wait until Dr. Stebbing comes back."

"Suppose you died meanwhile," was on the tip of Father Stirling's tongue, but he only shook his head. "And what is the question?" he asked, after a long pause.

Mrs. Howard shaded her face with her thin white hand, and remained silent. It was pride's last struggle, and Father Stirling watched her with rather a puzzled expression of countenance. But the hand was at last withdrawn—"Will you tell me where to find my child?"

"Will I give you Miss Howard's address?" he

replied slowly, striving to seem unmoved, "well, I really cannot remember it at this moment, but I can get it for you very easily. I expect, however, that she will be at the Cedars before long. All Mr. Darrell's family are in London just at present, for one of their two daughters is to take the veil next week, and I understand that Miss Howard is to return with Edith Darrell, a few days after the ceremony. I suppose, therefore, she will be in Harleyford in about a fortnight's time."

"Is she much attached to Emily Darrell, do you think?"

"Very much so, they are like own sisters."

"And I suppose she will be present at the ceremony?"

"Undoubtedly, seeing that the little nun-elect is at this moment visiting her."

"What a dreadful thing for a young girl to shut herself up in that way, just like a bird in a cage! What will she have to do? Visit poor people?"

"No; the order Miss Darrell is entering, is what we call an enclosed one; they never go out at all, but lead lives of prayer and meditation. It is a very strict, but, at the same time, a most beautiful order."

Mrs. Howard looked uneasily at him.

"Will you answer me one question candidly?" she asked.

"If I can."

"Do you think my Marion is likely to follow her example?"

"Not in the least likely, I should say," replied

the priest, laughing; "so make your mind quite easy on that score. I have never seen the smallest shadow of a vocation in her."

"I am so relieved," replied Mrs. Howard, bursting into tears; "for now I have set my mind on having her with me once again, it would break my heart to lose her so. My poor, dear child!"

Was ever woman so altered? As Father Stirling compared her with all the descriptions he had heard, and all the mental pictures he had formed of her, he made quite a meditation on the grace of God.

"There is one thing I cannot help wishing very much," observed the invalid, after a long silence.

"What is that?"

"That you were a Protestant clergyman."

"I am afraid I can hardly say amen to that," replied Father Stirling, smiling; "but may I ask why?"

"Because I should like to talk to you."

"Excuse me, but cannot you do so now?"

"What use would there be in doing so, when we believe such different things?"

"No, no," replied the priest; "you are mistaken, we have many points of belief in common; for although you stop short of my creed, I believe all that you do."

"Hardly, I think," replied the lady, "for I believe the Catholic religion is contrary to common sense."

"And yet you say every Sunday, 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church.' Come, my dear madam, is there not some little discrepancy here?"

Mrs. Howard smiled. "I know very little of controversy, but I presume what I mean by the Catholic Church is one thing, what you mean, another. To have spoken as an orthodox Protestant, I suppose I ought to have said, that the Roman Catholic Church is opposed to common sense."

"The two titles have precisely the same meaning, my dear Mrs. Howard; but may I ask what particular doctrine or doctrines, of our Church, you find so faulty?"

"I was afraid you were going to ask me that question, and I do not very well know how to answer it. I have my own ideas, generally, both on your religion and ours, but I will be candid with you, and tell you at once, that though, as one of its members, I prefer the latter; I have thought very little indeed about either one or the other."

Father Stirling looked at her very compassionately, and a prayer rose from the very bottom of his heart. He thought of Elias and the Sunamite's son in the days of old, and prayed, like him, that the dead might be brought to life.

"I wish it had not been so," she continued, "for those who live as I have never lived, would be happier here than I am now. It would be strange for you to hear a Protestant confession, and yet I feel as if I could almost make you one this afternoon."

"I shall be very happy to hear anything you like to tell me," replied the priest, "and to offer you any advice or consolation in my power."

"I have nothing very much to say," returned the invalid, in the same sad tone; "but all last night I lay awake thinking and thinking, and it almost seemed as if God held the past up before me, and asked me what I thought of it. It was not a bright picture, but I looked at it very steadily. Mr. Stirling, I have been very wicked, very harsh, and you, as well as I, know in what I have sinned."

"You mean in the matter of poor Marion?"

"Yes, I do; and it is a sin too, that let me do what I will, I can never atone for; I only wish I could—I only wish I could."

"But you acted upon principle in your severity, did you not?" asked the priest. "You believed her to be in error, and tried to drive her back to what you thought, and still think, to be the truth."

"No, I did not. If I had had any thought of this kind with regard to her, I should not feel as I do now. It was very different. I was angry with Marion for three reasons, first, because she dared to act independently of me; secondly, because of the ridicule and contempt with which I thought so strange a step would be visited; and thirdly, because a certain bright future I had pictured for her was dispelled by her own perversity. I had had a vision of her, as the mistress of a home all I could desire, and moving in a circle I knew she was fitted to adorn, and I almost felt to hate her in my disappointment. But, as to whether the change she had made was pleasing or displeasing to God, on this view of the subject I never bestowed one single thought. But this is not surprising, for,

during a life of nearly fifty years, I have never thought of Him at all till now."

"And now?" asked the priest, bending on her the full force of his calm gray eyes.

"I will try. If ever I arise from this bed, it shall be to exclaim, like the prodigal, 'I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee.'"

"You have said it already, for you see the errors of your past life, and are ready, by the grace of God, to do your best to amend them."

There was long silence, as each followed a train of thought too deep for words, but it was broken at length by the sick woman.

"I do so wish still that you were a Protestant!"

"And again I ask, why? Do you think that Catholics cannot sympathize with the sorrows of those who are not Catholics? Believe me, I feel deeply for you in this first moment of your awakening to the thought of God. Your trials have been great; but should they even be greater, you have only to place them in His hands 'who carried our griefs, and bore our infirmities.'"

"You speak of Christ," replied the invalid. "Mr. Stirling, my confession is only half complete, though at what I am about to say, you will, I know, be deeply shocked. Christian, as all have thought me, I am not one in heart. For years I have secretly doubted revealed religion. All seems a mist unworthy of God. I am not a sceptic, I am not a deist, still less am I an atheist, and I should wish to be a Christian; but, in the depths of my heart, I do not believe! I am speaking to you

now, words that never before have I dared to whisper to myself, for, as society is constituted, the woman who should frame such a sentiment into speech, would be looked upon as almost less than woman."

"Simply because she was more candid than so many of her fellows! Dear Mrs. Howard, is not this the belief, or rather, unbelief, of half the women of fashion around us? Alas! for the inconsistency of the world. She who says in words, 'I am not a Christian,' is barely respectable; she who in her actions says, 'I am,' is laughed at for a fool." He paused for a few minutes, and then continued: "It may appear rather strange, perhaps, at first sight, and yet it is perfectly true, that the disbeliever in revealed religion is actually more credulous than the Christian, taunted though the latter has often been with his credulity. For the sceptic, in refusing to allow that the truths of Christianity have been revealed to the world by God, attributes to the invention of man, doctrines that are entirely above his understanding. He makes him also the author of a religious system which, in spite of the bitter and active hostility of all that is most powerful in the world, and notwithstanding the restraint which it places upon his natural inclinations, has been embraced in every age and in every region.

"Nor is he less credulous with regard to prophecies, for it is admitted by all that events which have undoubtedly taken place had as undoubtedly been foretold hundreds of years before. The Birth of Christ in Bethlehem, the leading circumstances of

His Life, Passion, Death, and Burial; the destruction of Jerusalem; the scattering of the Jews, were all foretold long before they happened. They stand predicted in the pages of Holy Scripture; that they have occurred, is universally maintained. Suppose, then, I ask a sceptic how this can be, and he answers me, 'By chance;' does it not seem to you that the man who can believe in such a chance, or rather such a chain of chances as this, evinces more credulity than one who looks on the prophecies and their fulfilment as the direct work of God?"

"Yes; but then, one who believes in God as the Beneficent Father of the universe, cannot, at the same time, believe in chance. It seems to me only a disrespectful term for God's Providence."

"Exactly so, and yet this is one of the only three *natural* ways in which the exact accordance of scriptural prophecy with historical fact can be accounted for. Let us suppose, then, that he gives the second answer, and tells us that 'these historical events were planned to suit the prophecies, and fulfil them.' Why this would evince a credulity of mind more astonishing still. Just imagine. The whole life of a man had to be planned from his cradle to his grave; a city had to be encompassed, taken, and annihilated; a powerful people had to be scattered over the whole earth, and yet to be kept distinct from every other nation on its surface till the end of the world! And all this for no earthly purpose, but to fulfil a few texts. What would you think of this answer?"

"That a man who could think it any solution of the question, must be mad."

"Well, I do not think you will find the remaining answer any more sensible. Our sceptical friend, then, would inform you in the third place, that the prophecies, which he would triumphantly show, are seldom consecutive, but are found scattered here and there throughout the Sacred Writings, have evidently been dropped in *after* the events, to give authority to a newly-fledged Christianity. This at first sight, my dear Mrs. Howard, seems, perhaps, a more sensible answer; and yet the man who could give it, would be quite as credulous as one who should take shelter in either of the other replies. For how can it be supposed that the Jews, with their malicious hatred of Christianity, would have silently permitted additions to the sacred books, and especially the interpolation of passages which should support the abolition of the Mosaic dispensation? And even supposing the alterations to have been effected, would they have tamely suffered the destruction of every copy of the original version?"

"One would hardly think so."

Again there was silence, broken at length by the invalid. "I am very glad I spoke to you of this," she observed, in a low voice; "I shall think over what you have said very deeply, and God will help me to believe, for I do not want to doubt any longer. But will you do one thing more—teach me something of this Christianity of which I have hitherto been so strangely igno-

rant? You will do so as a Catholic, I know, of course; but, be that as it may, it makes no difference, for I must and will know who, and what Christ is."

He had commenced to speak to her when the sun was shining brightly, he did not cease until that sun was sinking in the western sky. He did as she asked him, he spoke to her of Christ. He began at the beginning of the story of Redemption, when the first man and woman were rejoicing amid the glories of the new creation, while the echoes of the mighty words, "*Fiat lux*," were still rolling around the eternal throne. He spoke of their great sin, and how its heavy shadow was to fall on their children through all generations; he spoke of the great promise, and how its light was to gladden the hearts of those children till the end of time. He spoke of the old covenant, with its statutes of terror, and rites of blood, leading ever upward to its consummation on the Hill of Calvary; he spoke of the new covenant, streaming downward from that Hill, in those ruddy streamlets that were to fructify the whole earth. And then in simple words he told of the birth, the infancy, and childhood of the Messiah. Of the exile in Egypt, the home life in Nazareth, and the wandering life around Galilee, seeking for souls. And then, as the evening sunset streamed around them, rich and red, he spoke of Gethsemane, of the scattered disciples, the streets of Jerusalem, and their shrieking rabble, of Calvary, and the Cross. He said no more, but silently sat and watched

the shadow on the wall, so silently, that those who saw not the burning and throbbing of the heart within, vibrating still with the echo of the words he had spoken, might have said he was a statue.

But his listener. Strange, he had hardly uttered a word with which she had not been familiar from her babyhood, and yet, when at length he turned to her, she was weeping like a child.

"I am afraid," he exclaimed, in his usual brisk but soothing tone, "that this conversation has been too much for you."

"No, no," she returned, drying her tears, "it was not too much, indeed it was not. I cannot tell you how I like to hear you talk. You have made me feel like a new creature."

Father Stirling smiled. "Will you let me ring the bell for my little friend, Sally, for I fear you will be getting exhausted for want of refreshment. I was very thoughtless not to think of it before. I shall have the doctor forbidding me the house, and I should not like that," he added, giving a vigorous pull at the bell.

"What! do you mean to say that you will come to see me again?" asked the invalid, with a sparkling eye.

"To be sure I will, if you will let me come."

"Indeed, indeed, I will. You may believe, Mr. Stirling, that I do not speak to you in the language of compliment, when I assure you this is the first happy hour I have known, since Mr. Lisle wrote and told me that Marion was a Catholic."

At this moment Sally entered.

"It was I who rang for you," said Father Stirling. "If you had seen how pale and tired your mistress looked just now, you would have said I should never come again."

Sally smiled, and ran down for the tea-things.

"And now," said the priest, once more approaching his Protestant penitent, "I must bid you good-by. Shall I write for Miss Howard's address?"

"Not yet. I should like to see you again first, if I can."

"Very well; I will come again the day after to-morrow."

"Thank you very much. But you will stay now, and let Sally get you a cup of tea?"

"Nothing, thank you. I expect my old Rufus is getting desperate outside. Good-by."

Rufus was decidedly put out of the way. Never had his master taken such a liberty with him before, as to leave him standing in the sun for three whole hours, and he shook his ears back in a very ill-tempered fashion half the way home. But never in his life before had his master heard a Protestant confession.

"I should think you must be half-dead, ma'am," said Sally, as she handed her mistress the tea. "I wish you would just try and eat this piece of toast with it."

Much to Sally's astonishment, not only that, but two pieces more disappeared, while Mrs. Howard looked so bright, that her little maid was

even more puzzled than she had been in the morning.

"Father Stirling is a good doctor, is he not, Sally?" asked her mistress, with a smile.

"I should rather think he is. Why, he has done more for you in one afternoon than Dr. Bernard, clever as he is, has done in a month. I hope he will come again."

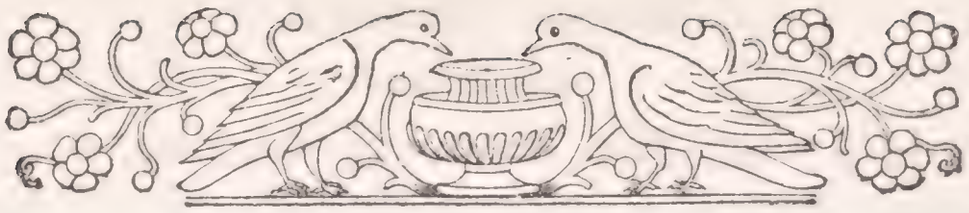
"The day after to-morrow, he says. Will you pull the blind quite up?"

The girl obeyed, and the room was flooded with a sea of gold and crimson, from the midst of which the invalid glanced upward, with the radiance of a new hope shining in her eye.

"This is a bright and beautiful world after all, Sally."

"So it is, ma'am, very beautiful. If the people who live in it was only made to match, we should be very happy, very happy indeed."

"Why, silly child," exclaimed her mistress, "earth would be heaven then!"



CHAPTER XXX.

ONCE more old Rufus is standing before the green gate, prancing with impatience till the stirrups dance again, wondering what can keep his master so long. Shall we step into the little house and look for him, dear reader? Let us go into Mrs. Howard's room, where Father Stirling sat so long the day Sally first brought him, talking to the "dreamer awakened." No one is there, nor does it any longer wear the air of a sick chamber, with the even high-piled bed, snowy drapery, and country perfume of marjoram-scented linen. As we seek him down stairs, glancing into each pretty room we pass, all is so bright and gay with flowers, that it seems like a preparation for some grand gala day. Even Sally's and Polly's whispers, as they bustle about in their own domain, seem to be of something very bright to-morrow. There are voices in the little breakfast-room, and we may enter if you will, for story tellers and story readers are privileged persons. They listen to private conversations and confidential communications by the dozen, peep into love letters, and even dive, with a sort of magical *passe-tout*, into the very bottom of the speakers' hearts, and yet nobody ever gives them the ugly name of eaves-droppers.

And is that Mrs. Howard, she who so lately trembled in the shadow of death? To be sure it is, though, to see her now, sitting so uprightly at the open window, with her work-box and writing materials lying around her, one could hardly imagine her to be the same woman, who only a fortnight ago had almost fainted in trying to write a letter. It is a wonderful change truly, and under God, Father Stirling has been a wonderful physician. Mrs. Howard has been talking long and earnestly, and as he listens, Father Stirling rests his arm upon the window sill, and looks out across the bright country lands, where the spire in the distance rises from among its ivy and its graves, and the ripening corn is waving like a yellow sea all around it.

"And so our conversation of last Sunday evening was our first Catholic one, you consider?" he remarked, as the lady concluded her observations, and waited for his reply.

"I think so; all you have said at other times is exactly, I know, what Henry Lisle would have uttered. Until last Sunday, I could not have told that yours was a different faith to his."

"And what impression did that conversation leave on you, may I ask? Did the first glance of my cloven foot give you a better or worse impression of us?"

"I cannot say. Once I knew too little to be able to criticise your religion, now I know too much to dare to judge it. Much as I wish to become a real Christian, I tremble still at the

word Catholic. If what you told me the other day was all I had to learn, I might, perhaps, some day believe it true; but I have been thinking since of many things I have heard about the Catholic religion, and some of them seem very strange indeed."

"Tell me one of these things."

"Well, the worship of the Virgin Mary, for one instance. It seems, if I may so phrase it, a robbery of God, to worship any other than Him. Indeed, I cannot see how one can do so, and at the same time, steer clear of idolatry."

"It would, certainly, be impossible, if our Blessed Lady were worshipped in the sense in which you understand the word. But you are mistaken, my dear Mrs. Howard. We worship God as the source of Light, of Life, and of Truth, as the Almighty Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; we honor Mary as the first created intelligence, but only as a creature after all. To compare ourselves with Mary, would be presumption, to compare Mary with God, would be blasphemy. There is a distance unimaginable between the highest archangel and the Virgin Mother; but there is a distance infinite as the breadth of heaven itself, between that Mother and her Son. And yet we worship her with a fond, devoted, childlike love, if we cease to do so, we lose half our peace and light. But this is not strange. The diamond in the monarch's crown does not sparkle less brilliantly in the sunshine, because the windows of his palace glitter in the beam as well. There is room

in the human heart for many kinds of love, for friend, child, sister, parent, wife, and country, and yet, amid all, God still holds His sway in the Christian's heart. Shall we not, then, find a way to love His Mother, without trespassing on His high vantage ground?"

He paused, but Mrs. Howard remaining silent, he continued.

"I cannot imagine how any one, who contemplates Mary in the immensity of her dignity, can think of her as an ordinary woman. Mother of God! There is that in the very name, that seems to cast us prostrate at her feet. Only show a woman to the world, who should be daughter of one mighty monarch, wife to another, and mother of a child one day destined to hold the reins of a great empire. Show her, at the same time, matchless in human virtue, skilled in human arts and science, profound in human learning, protectress, moreover, of the oppressed, and common pleader of the cause of all men. How would men regard her, what national homage would be too great, what love could her people testify, that would be too deep for such a queen as this? Yet, let this woman be what she might, Mary is more, for what she would be on earth, Mary is in heaven. Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, Spouse of God the Holy Ghost, she shines upon us with a threefold radiance, and binds us to her with a triple cord of love. Could we look on her in heaven, we should see her as she is; looking up to her from earth, she is simply a mystery.

Threefold in her glory, she is threefold in her power; and prays, as she alone can pray, for her children here below, the younger brethren of her Son."

"But, Mr. Stirling, how can she do this? You say she is only a creature, and yet you seem to endue her with the God-like attribute of Omniscience, else how could she read the thoughts, and hear the prayers of people in every part of the world at once?"

"Is the devil a creature?"

"Yes, of course he is."

"Is he omniscient?"

"No; what a strange question!"

"How does he tempt the whole world at once, then?"

"I am sure I don't know, I never thought of this!" exclaimed the lady, opening her eyes.

"Most likely not," cried Father Stirling, much amused at her astonishment; "'we discover things that our philosophy never dreamt of,' every day. You must not imagine, however, that I draw any parallel between the power of Satan and that of our Blessed Mother, for her sympathies are one thing, his temptations another. The prince of the power of the air is, next to Mary, the highest created intelligence, and with that intelligence he directs his myrmidons, those myriads of spirits that fell from heaven with him, but no more. He is a spirit, and as such, being endowed with the attributes of agility, he can pass more swiftly than light, but he can only be in one place at a time.

Now, with Mary it is very different. Her home is heaven, and as she gazes on God in the Beatific Vision, she sees the reflection of the universe in Him, perhaps in that sea of crystal that stretches far and wide before the Eternal Throne. There lie our troubles, there our joys, and Mary, as she gazes on them in God, prays, for every throb of that Immaculate Heart is prayer."

"But why call her immaculate? Did she never sin?"

"Never. Could God, think you—He who is of 'eyes too pure to behold iniquity'—could He have been the Child of a sin-stained mother? Impossible. He 'who loves to repose among the lilies' would not have the lily that He chose, flecked with a single spot of the earth from whence it grew. And Mary was that lily. Immaculate from the first moment of her existence, immaculate in her life and death, immaculate she was assumed to heaven."

"But, really, Mr. Stirling, how do you know all this? The Bible says nothing concerning it."

"There are many things on which the Bible is silent. Do you think the few pages of the Gospels contain all the words and actions of our Lord? Certainly not, for St. John expressly says, that 'could all these be collected, the world itself should not contain the books that should be written.' Yet why should one thing that He said, or one action that He performed, be recorded more than another? Simply because God so willed it. Some things not explicitly recorded in the Bible,

we know, by inference; some not recorded at all, by tradition. Nor is it the Catholic Church alone that recognizes tradition. Why do Protestants baptize their infants, when not a word is said concerning it in the Bible; and why do they sanctify the first day of the week, and do their hardest work upon the seventh, when the Bible says, 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, for the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God'? They do both upon tradition. The Bible is undoubtedly the word of God, and to act contrary to its commands and precepts, would be to act contrary to Him who gave it; but it was never given as the common text-book for the mass of mankind. 'They who are unstable, wrest ever the Holy Scriptures to their own destruction,' and these words that the great apostle spoke by inspiration, might be the natural language of us all, even in the present generation, and that from the depths of our experience."

"And yet there is enough in the Bible to carry us to heaven."

"If we knew how to use it, undoubtedly; but where would be the cure, think you, if, instead of consulting a physician, the sick man sent for a pharmacopœia, and studied it himself? There is, certainly, a probability that he might simply do himself neither good nor harm, though the chances are, I think, that he would get poisoned. And yet, place that little book in the hands of a mediciner, and strength grows in his patients as he consults it. 'Understandest thou what thou read-

est?' asked St. Philip of the officer of Queen Candace, who sat in his chariot, with the Scriptures open before him. 'How can I,' was the reply, 'unless some man should guide me?' Was St. Philip surprised at the answer? In no way. We simply hear that he took his place beside him in the chariot, and 'preached unto him Jesus;' and where the written word had been incomprehensible, the preaching of the Church, represented by the apostle, prevailed, and the 'man of great authority was baptized, and went on his way rejoicing.'

"The Bible, I repeat, cannot be too much respected, but the child must beware how he plays with fire, or tampers with sharp edged tools, and the man must beware how he plays with the fire of the Spirit, or tampers with the Word of God, 'sharper than a two-edged sword.' And is respect for the Bible, do you think, compatible with using it as a common school-book? Shall the decrees and revelations of the Most High God be read in turn with the history of a few ephemeral nations, and the sayings and discoveries of a few poor worms? While the traveller stands entranced, as he gazes for the first time on Loch Lomond, the shepherd boy, born upon its margin, walks whistling by; what is there for him, but rocks, trees, sky, and water! 'Familiarity breeds contempt;' and he who has spelt wearily through the abstruse epistles in his childhood, will find it hard in later years to see their beauty. But we are wandering from the subject we commenced; do you think

you see any better yet, in what light we regard the Blessed Virgin Mary?"

"Yes; but still I do not see, notwithstanding all you have said, that there is any necessity to pray to her, or any other saint at all. You believe that God hears prayers that are addressed directly to Him, do you not."

"Certainly."

"And answers them?"

"If He sees good to do so."

"Then what need is there of any medium in addressing Him?"

"Mrs. Howard, do you think St. Paul ever prayed?"

"Of course he did."

"Were his prayers ever answered?"

"Yes, sometimes miraculously."

"Then why did he ask his brethren to pray for him?"

She was silent.

"What do you mean when you say on Sunday, 'I believe in the communion of saints.' Do not even Protestants say, that it means a communion of love, and sympathy, and prayers."

"I really do not know what they think it means," replied his companion, with a slight flush.

"Then take my word for it, such is their version of its meaning. Like us, too, though not so often as we, they pray for their friends, and ask them in their turn to remember them at the throne of grace. They could not well scruple to do so, when they read in their own Bibles, that 'the fervent prayer

of a righteous man availeth much.' Therefore, my dear friend, you see plainly that those of your own faith frequently use mediums between themselves and God."

"But these mediums are living people. If I ask you to pray for me to-night, as I shall do before you leave me, that is very different to kneeling down and saying to one long since dead, pray for me."

"Very different, because, in speaking to me, you address a fellow-sinner, one who, for aught you know, may be out of a state of grace, and whose prayers, in that case, would be valueless for others, until he repented himself, whereas, in the saint, you invoke one, standing in the immediate presence of God Himself. So the question simply resolves itself into this; can the blessed in heaven hear, see, and sympathize with those on earth? and I say they can. How else can angels rejoice over a repentant sinner? and does not the inspired word itself tell us, that the saints are as the angels of God in heaven, and that they are equal to the angels? There is also a great instance of the intercession of an angel being heard and answered, in the book of Zacharias. I will try and give it you in the sacred words themselves. 'The angel of the Lord answered, and said, O, Lord of Hosts! how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, with which Thou hast been angry these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered the angel that talked with Him, with good words, and comfortable words.' Again,

in the Apocalypse, we hear that 'the four-and-twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints;' and further on, in the same book of mysterious revelation, we read: 'And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God. And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended before God from the hand of the angel.' What could possibly be more conclusive, my dear Mrs. Howard, than these two last passages? The saints here spoken of are the blessed in heaven; what must have been their prayers that the angel thus presented before God? Were they for themselves? Certainly not; what then could they, who have light, and peace, and joy, and love, in fullest, broadest perfection, pray for, unless it were for their brethren still fighting and struggling on earth?"

"But you pray more often to the Virgin Mary than you do to God, at least so Protestants say."

"I am not prepared to admit this; but, even if it were so, remember, that in praying to her we pray to Him. Mary, of herself, has no power to grant us anything, either spiritual or temporal, but God has made her the dispenser of His graces, and in Him, and through Him she obtains us all things. Our prayers are cold, faint, doubting; hers, who shall describe them! If, at the moment of the annunciation, she was 'full of grace, and blessed

amongst women,' what is she after all the graces and glories that have fallen on her since then? And if she is too compassionate not to pray, too dearly cherished by the ever Blessed Trinity to pray unheard, shall we make light of such an advocate, and prefer our own cold prayers to hers? Like the sun, God shines forth upon His creation, the Source of light and heat, but we cannot gaze on Him with mortal eyes, cannot endure the rays of His glory. With light reflected from the unapproachable brightness of God, moon-like, Mary shines from heaven, and we gaze without difficulty on her tempered radiance, and pass on our way, amid the calm white rays of her love. Truly, truly, when the reformers tore away everything bright and beautiful from the ancient Church, and like foxes and night-birds, made for themselves a home amid the dismantled ruins, fairest of all the sweet things they ravished, were the altars of Mary. From the moment that her images were broken, her pictures defaced, her rosaries scattered bead by bead, and that the Angelus ceased to float upon the breeze, from that moment the poetry of religion faded from English hearts and homes."

"And yet," objected his listener, "England is prosperous, and even religious."

"Yes, prosperous with a human prosperity; religious, with a cold, calculating religion, that spends hundreds on its churches, and hundreds of thousands on its homes. That gives its dole of worship once a week to God, as though calculating to a nicety what it must do to be saved. That finds

goods works supererogatory, the pain of fasting contrary to the liberty of the Gospel, and penance food for laughter. That never takes one generous view of religion, nor offers one mortification on its altar. It is an easy thing to kneel in a softly-cushioned pew, and call one's self 'a miserable sinner,' but it is not so easy to feel the hard wood of the cross pressing into the weary shoulder, and yet take it, as the just reward of those miserable sins."

"You are very bitter against Protestants."

"God forbid. Indeed, my dear friend, you are quite mistaken; I know too well the heaviness of the cloud that obscures their path, to blame them when they fail to pierce it. Some people tell us that the age of miracles is past, but I look on every conversion as a special miracle of God."

"Do you think I shall ever be a Catholic?"

He was silent.

"Do tell me."

"What do you think yourself?"

"I cannot say; your religion is very beautiful, and—" she paused.

"Let me finish the sentence," said the priest; "I will pray to be directed."

Mrs. Howard smiled, and Father Stirling rose to take his leave.

"Good-by; try and keep calm for to-morrow."

"I will; but Mr. Stirling—"

He bent forward to catch the low tones of her voice.

"Will you pray for me? I should like to be a Catholic, if I could."

"I will, on one condition."

She glanced up, inquiringly.

"That you do not call me 'Mr. Stirling' any more."

"Father, will you pray for me?"

"I will, my child; indeed I will."

"Poor thing," he muttered, as two minutes later he was riding down the street; "poor thing, there is no crucible like the crucible of affliction, after all."

The red sky had not been a false prophet at either Ennington or Harleyford, for when the morrow came, the August sun shone forth in his most ardent splendor from the bright blue sky above. Sally had been up and busy from a very early hour, and she and Polly, fresh and smart as two country posies, were on the tip-toe of expectation. Mrs. Howard, with a smile on her trembling lip, sat before her toilette glass, that reflected a countenance strangely different to the Mrs. Howard of other days.

The night had been once more a sleepless one, but it had not been weary, for every hour that chimed had been another nearer to her child, and the mother, in sweet anticipation, had watched for the morning light. As it broke upon the bed, she reached a book from her pillow, and began to read. But it was not for long, for the words that met her eyes seemed so much like an echo from her own night thoughts, that she could go no further. "What is truth?" Momentous question, asked by Pilate, who yet tarried not for his answer. Should she be like him? Forbid it, heaven! It seemed

as though the form of the ancient Roman started from the shadows of the past, to warn by his unanswered question, those who, after glancing at the light, pass on into yet deeper darkness. All she had read and heard, during the last few weeks of her sickness, came back into her mind; strange thoughts and feelings, growing, like the morning light around her, stronger and intenser every moment. "What is truth?" she whispered, as she replaced her book. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," came the answer, and with it, a new born faith, a fitful hope, a trembling gleam of love. Mrs. Howard rose, and prepared to meet her child, but over and above her calm expectation, there hovered the same look that had puzzled Mr. Bernard a fortnight before, and had sent Sally on her mission of love to Harleyford.

"The missis is altered as I never see," said Polly, as she returned to the kitchen from carrying up Mrs. Howard's breakfast.

"You'd be altered, child, if you had borne all she has, and that ever since the spring."

"But I don't mean in her face, I mean in her ways."

"What have her ways got to do with you, I should like to know? Just you sit down and eat your breakfast, and mind your own business," cried Sally, in a tone of ineffable contempt.

Polly laughed. "You haven't altered yourn, any way about. I don't believe the missis would have spoken to me as sharp as that, if I had done ever such a thing to vex her."

"I'd advise you not to try."

"I don't mean to, for I like her now; I used to hate her once, though."

"More shame for you. And you call yourself a Christian, I suppose!"

"Well, I suppose I am. I ain't a hanimal, am I?"

Sally only poured her tea into her saucer in indignant silence. "I tell you what it is," she exclaimed, at length, "I shan't be sorry when you're off. I'd rather by half do all the work myself, than be pestered with you; you young girls are so awful aggravating.'

Polly, who infinitely preferred her berth at Mrs. Howard's to her father's cottage, with its weekly luxury of fat bacon, began to whimper.

Sally gradually softened. "Come, leave off that noise, and we'll see. I like you well enough about me, when you behave yourself."

The tears ceased, and Polly commenced a vigorous attack on the bread and butter.

"What did Mrs. Howard say to you," inquired Sally, "that made you think of her being altered?"

"She told me I looked very neat and tidy, and asked me how I got on with you?"

"What did you say?"

"I said very well, for of course I didn't know you was going to snap one up so, when I come back."

Sally smiled. "I always get cross when I hear a word said against her."

"Why?"

"Why! What a child you are, to be sure, for

knowing the whys and wherefores of everything! Well, if you must know, it's just this. For many years after I first came here, I saw very little of Mrs. Howard, and thought about her still less. It was Miss Marion as I had to do with. As you, and all the rest of the village know, Miss Marion went away, and you know too, how her mother said, that until she was a Protestant again, she should never come back. Now a great many people in the place think that this was all the missis's doings, but I've my eyes about me, Polly, and I know better. There were many days, when, proud as she was, the missis would have given way, if Miss Marion had only had some one to speak for her. But she hadn't, poor dear young lady; for as for me, I was, of course, as good as nothing. I should only have lost my place, and my nose with it, if I had said a word. No, as I said just now, it wasn't Mrs. Howard's doing, but all that Mr. Lisle—you remember him, the parson as used to be here before Mr. Mason. I think, and so does a good many people, that he had somehow been keeping company with Miss Marion, but anyways, he turned against her as bitter as gall. Now, if you like, I do hate him above a bit! One day I recollect fetching him in a glass of ale; of course they both kept quiet while I was in the room, but as I shut the door, I heard him say, quite plain, 'Don't give way! don't give way!' She had been crying all the morning, I could see by her eyes, but, of course, she said nothing to me, for it wasn't her nature."

"I know that," interrupted her auditor.

"After Mr. Lisle went that day, she seemed more unhappy than ever, and soon afterwards we left Ennington, she and me, and went to live a lonely life in Clifton. Laws, Polly! I never was so dull in my life! Down a strange kind of crooked way they call the Zigzags one day, across the Downs another, or else a little shopping in Clifton, or in large streets in Bristol, which we never seemed to see twice, that was all we ever did, and then we used to come back to the lodgings for the rest of the day, each to keep our own company. And amongst it all, the worst was, that I could see her heart was breaking. If she would only have spoken to me, I used sometimes to feel that I could have helped her to bear her great sorrow. But she never said a word to me about anything but my business, for while we were there, I used to make her dresses, and do all sorts of things to take up my time. She wouldn't have had me with her, only she didn't like the looks of being alone. Well, would you believe, Polly, I grew quite fond of her, although she never seemed to notice me any more than the first day I had come. But I determined to make her like me, and at last the day came. One morning she got a letter from Miss Smith, the person that took the house while we were in Clifton, and something in it vexed her so, that she burst out crying right before me. I only went up to her, as I felt it right to do at the moment, seeing her so lonely and unprotected,

but I felt as if I could throw my arms around her neck. I don't know what I said, but I never saw anything so angry as she was for a minute. She seemed half as tall again, and looked just as I could fancy a great queen. I tried to beg her pardon, but I broke out into such a great sob instead, that I always feel quite ashamed when I think of it. And what do you think she did? Why, she came straight up to me, and put her two hands upon my shoulders with such an altered face, that I thought it couldn't possibly be her. But it was her, and from that moment she grew quite changed to me. She keeps her place, and I keep mine, and so we always shall, but in heart we are like friends. She is a widow, and I am an orphan, and there seems to be something more than common that binds us together. Since her illness she has altered still more, and if she goes on much longer like this, we shall have her an angel. But somehow, I don't want that, for then she would, perhaps, take to her wings, and fly away forever. Now, Polly, you know I haven't told you this, to go and tell everybody, but just to let you see how much there was good in her all the time that she seemed so proud and cold, for you see it was only seeming."

Polly shook her head. "I like her very much now, and I only hope she will keep like she is. But people changes sometimes after they get well, don't they?" ruminated Polly.

"Not such as her," replied Sally; "no, child,

it's all the Lord's doing, this is. Do you know, Polly, what she puts me in mind of, when I see her so good and so loving?"

"No. What?"

"Of the bright fresh stream that gushed out of the hard rock when Moses struck it. If it hadn't been for that rod, the water would have been in it, I suppose, to this day; and if it hadn't pleased the Lord to smite poor missis with a heavy trouble, the love that we see now might have been shut up in her heart till her dying day. "Don't you think so?"

"Yes," said Polly, trying to look wise. "Who's the gentleman as comes here so often?"

"A minister," replied Sally.

"A minister, is he? What a queer cut of a coat he do wear, to be sure!"

"Never mind his coat; it's the cut of his face as I like."

"Does he live far off?"

"Not very," replied Sally, who had been enjoined by her mistress to say as little as possible concerning their visitor.

"It's him as is coming with miss to-day, aint it?"

"Yes, he is a friend of hers."

"Is he married?"

"No."

"Perhaps he's after Miss Marion too," said Polly, thoughtfully.

"No he isn't, so you'd better not be making any more guesses. He's a reg'lar right-down bachelor, and no mistake."

"O goodness!" cried Polly; "but, however do you know, he ain't so old?"

A ring from the bed-room bell silenced the speaker, and left her to finish her bread and butter unassisted.

* * * * * * * *

A repentant mother! Reader, the veil must fall! Such was a spectacle for angels, not for men. Even Father Stirling lingered in the porch for full ten minutes, before he ventured in, stroking Tyrza, and humming the "four-leaved shamrock."

That afternoon Sally and Polly kept house alone, and old Rufus bore three happy hearts behind him to Harleyford. A grateful tear twinkled in her eye, as the mistress of the Cedars embraced the friend of her youth, and with no slight emotion, bade her welcome to her home and heart.

"How things does change about in this world, 'Liza, my girl!" said Turner, as she that night settled herself to sleep.

"Didn't I say she would come round after a bit, mother?"

"So you did, so you did; the Lord forgive me for all the things as I've ever said agin her. How she do be changed to be sure! O, deary, deary me! Miss Marion is as happy as a queen, that she be, the Lord love her!"

And the Lord does love her; fragile instrument in the working of great and glorious things! The bright curls nestle to-night against her mother's cheek, and Golden-hair dreams of heaven.

CHAPTER XXXI.

MRS. HOWARD became a Catholic. A month later, the cottage at Ennington was to let, and Tyrza purred contentedly before the kitchen fire of his new dwelling at Harleyford. Naturally enough, Mrs. Howard regretted the sweet little home that had welcomed her as a bride, and sheltered her as a widow, but this regret was but a small item to be weighed against the enjoyment of Catholic privileges, and, like Tyrza, she soon grew accustomed to the change. She was very happy. Happy in the society of her old friends, happy in her child, happy in her glorious and new found faith. And yet the past was not forgotten. Her new religion taught her too well the value of tribulation for her to forget its lessons, and often, very often, even when her hope and love were brightest, she looked back. Looked back at the gentle husband to whom she had been a wayward and exacting wife, at the child wandering from her mother's arms, at the outraged relation dying unreconciled, until fairly wearied with the dreariness of the prospect, she turned to the future for relief. And what was Mrs. Howard's future? What it had been, a fabric raised from the earthly elements around her, piled high on a foundation of

ambition, cemented with pride? No, something very different lay before her now, and she gazed upon it silently and thoughtfully. "Rejoice with fear," says the apostle, and she trembled as she read and meditated on final perseverance. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for those who love Him," and with restored confidence, she walked on her way with a firm foot, while the music of heaven seemed already ringing around her path.

And what did Marion all this time? Was not her cup of joy running over? She was very happy, and whenever she compared, as she did twenty times a day, the joy of her present life, with troubles not long passed by, she smiled very brightly. Nor was even the thought of Edward, left alone in his little home, a serious drawback to this happiness, for she knew that he kept up his heart by promising it a mistress at no very distant day. Poor brother Edward, he was very philosophical, and yet, in spite of his philosophy, he felt rather lonely sometimes over his solitary breakfast and silent dinner. But, "Marion is where she ought to be," was the thought that chased away his discontent, and he only worked harder than ever in his garden.

And so in the freshly-painted house, half-way between the Cedars and the Church, Golden-hair and her mother lived together. There was something even more than filial in Marion's affection, for mingled with her love was a solicitude almost

maternal, and truly, most truly, was it appreciated. "Perpetual Sunshine," Mrs. Darrell called her, and told her one morning, as she kissed her, that hers was now a life without a shadow. Was she right?

"I wonder, my dear," said Mrs. Howard, that very evening, after a long talk about the old days at Ennington, "I wonder how our old friend Henry Lisle gets on in his new living."

There was no answer.

"Poor fellow," continued the mother, musingly, "I should like to see him, but I suppose that will never be."

In an instant the curls were drooping over the table amid such a heart-rending sob, that the name was neutral ground hereafter.

It was a dreary November day, a dull morning had subsided into a still duller afternoon, and the shadows were deepening fast. Mrs. Howard was sitting before the fire, and Marion, no longer able to work, was standing by the window, lost in a reverie.

"He is at home by this time," said Mrs. Howard, suddenly looking up.

"Who?" asked Marion, starting.

"Joe, of course. What a strange child you are. Were we not just now talking of him?"

"Yes, I remember now, but I did not think of him for the minute."

"You thought I meant Edward, I suppose. I wonder we have not heard from him. Perhaps we shall have a letter in the morning, saying at what time we may expect him. He must come to-

morrow, to sign the deeds of partnership. Well, his bed is quite ready, even if he were to come to-night, for Sally has been airing it, and arranging his room all the morning. Dear boy! I do so long to see him! I am sure, Marion, I shall grow to love him quite as much for his own sake as for yours, or even your poor dear father's, for his letters could not be more affectionate to me, if I were his very own mother. Just hand me his portrait. I must have another look at him; though if this is like him, I think I know his face pretty well already."

Marion gave her the morocco case, and a conversation ensued that effectually roused the little dreamer from her reverie. To have talked to her of Edward and Edith, would have awakened her, had she been one of the seven sleepers. A double knock at the door, however, brought the chat to a sudden conclusion. The door opened, and Mrs. Howard's hand was grasped in Joe Darrell's.

"Dear Mrs. Howard," he exclaimed, "I am so truly pleased to meet you. As you may imagine, your name has been a conspicuous item in every letter I have received from home for the last two months. And how is Marion?" he asked, turning to her, and pressing her hand with the quiet frankness of an elder brother. "My congratulations come late in the day, but they are very sincere ones. You must be very happy now!"

"I am, indeed," she replied, in a voice trembling with emotion.

"And so are we happy," continued Joe, in the

same calm clear tone, "very happy in having you so near us. We shall have the old musical evenings over again now. Won't it be jolly! We will sing our old duets till the Cedars ring again! You have not forgotten 'All's Well,' I hope?"

"No," said Marion, looking at him in some amazement.

"We must rout up Jessie and Dora too," he continued. "Those were nice evenings we used to have at their house. 'And so we will again,' as the song says, 'and so we will again!'"

"You seem quite revelling in the anticipation of your musical evenings, Joe," remarked the elder lady. "Well, they say, 'music hath charms,' but perhaps something else in Mr. Seymour's house has still greater ones. Jessie is a nice-looking girl, and they tell me that Dora is very clever."

"To be sure; you see I am no bad judge!"

Mrs. Howard smiled, but there was more of perplexity than mirth in Marion's laugh.

"It is not much more than an hour since I arrived," said Joe, "but I was obliged to run over to have just a few minutes chat with you. My mother wants you to go back with me to spend the evening. It is not foggy; do you think you might venture?"

"I think so," said Mrs. Howard, rising, and walking to the window; "but now tell me, is your health improved?"

"Very much," replied Joe; "indeed, I have come back an altered being;" and there was a side glance across the room. "I have had exercise of

body, I can assure you, and almost more exercise than I could manage for the mind. But I have accomplished my task;" and Joe's dark eyes flashed with unwonted energy.

"You have been alone during the latter part of your tour, have you not?" asked Mrs. Howard.

"No," replied Joe, "not alone, but led, helped, guided, assisted, or my task would never have been completed."

"Why, what was it?" asked the lady, surprised at his earnestness; "and who assisted you in accomplishing it?"

Joe paused and smiled. "My task!" he exclaimed; "such a one, that when I look back upon the last two months I am lost in wonder. I will tell you," he added, suddenly changing his manner; "I have visited France, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany, since August. What do you think of that for a task?"

"Pretty well—and your companion?"

"Did I tell you I had had one?"

"To be sure you did, not two minutes since—a leader, guide, director; in short, everything one could imagine to be most requisite in an unknown country."

"Ah, yes—though you misunderstood me—but never mind, you are right, notwithstanding, for I had a companion. A companion, too, that I will not attempt to describe, for you will meet him to-night, and be able to judge of his merits for yourselves."

"You were very fortunate to fall in with him."

"Very," said Joe. "I met him by—well—not by chance—but suddenly in Paris. Such an eye for the beauties of nature, such a mind to penetrate her works, such a will to overcome fatigue and difficulties, I never met before."

"Is he young?"

"Not very—about five-and-thirty."

"I am glad you have brought him home with you," said Mrs. Howard; "for I am quite anxious to see him. Why, my dear boy, he must be a perfect phœnix!"

Joe laughed, just as he used to do in the hay-fields, when they were all boys and girls together, Marion thought.

"Then, I suppose," observed Mrs. Howard, "I am to infer that your trip has been a pleasant one."

"Well, yes," replied the young man, rather hesitatingly, "I suppose you may, upon the whole, though even the Drachenfels, Swiss glaciers, and Paris gayeties have their drawbacks. But Rome repaid me for all, beautiful, classic, Catholic Rome! I felt as if I never could have left her. Yet here I am, you see, fully prepared to forget my enthusiasm, and buckle to business. Ensconced behind the desk and ledger, I shall soon forget even the Eternal City."

"No, you will not," said a low, timid voice.

"Do you not think so?" he asked, turning to the speaker, while a flush of delight shot across his dark features. "Well, Marion, perhaps you are right, perhaps I appreciate such things more than I myself imagine."

"One who could not, would have neither a great mind nor a large heart, and Joe Darrell has both."

Mrs. Howard looked up, rather surprised.

Joe laughed. "You did not think your quiet little daughter was quite such a flatterer, did you, Mrs. Howard?"

"She is no flatterer, for I know she speaks the truth; but you must be a great favorite, for she does not often speak her sentiments so unreservedly. Is it not so, Marion?"

"He is everybody's favorite, mamma, you do not know him yet; when you do, you will not be surprised at hearing everybody praise him."

Joe turned over the leaves of a book that lay on the table, to hide his emotion. Fully did he appreciate the words of the speaker, but fully also did he understand that every encomium was another stone, raising yet higher the wall of separation between them. But Joe had learned his hard lesson of resignation to good purpose, for in two minutes he was himself again.

"Edward is coming up to-morrow, I believe," said Mrs. Howard.

"So I hear, to sign the deeds of partnership; then hurrah! for Howard & Darrell!"

"In more senses than one!" said Mrs. Howard.

"In more senses than one," repeated Joe. "God grant that both partnerships may prove happy ones."

"It will be your turn next, Joe," said Mrs. Howard.

"What to do?"

"To follow Edward's example, to be sure."

"And get spliced! No, I was cut out for a bachelor. Wouldn't be bothered with a wife for all I could see. But you have not told me yet how you like Harleyford," he added, changing the subject rather abruptly.

"I have good reason to like it," answered the lady.

"That's no criterion, Mrs. Howard. When I was a youngster they always told me that I ought to like Latin and Greek, and the master's cane, and the doctor's physic; but I had a wonderful aversion to them all, nevertheless."

"Then I am not so difficult to please, for I love Harleyford dearly, both for its own sake and your mother's. I do not know what I should do without her now."

"There are not many like her, that's my private opinion," said Joe. "Young fellows talk a great deal about independence now-a-days, but those who talk loudest are the very first to run home to their mothers, when things are not straight with them. As for mine—I could never say what she has been to me, or what I should do without her."

"May it be very long before you solve the sad problem by experience, my dear boy."

Merry as Joe naturally was, his observations not unfrequently turned even the gayest conversations into a serious channel. Perhaps from the simple fact, that they were rarely speculative, but came freely, impulsively from the depths of his own heart,

and from their very artlessness and simplicity, found an echo in the experience of those with whom he talked. Had Joe Darrell tried to make a speech on a mother's love, he would signally have failed, but volumes would not have furnished such a testimony to the value of his own, as did the glistening eye and kindling cheek with which he spoke of her.

Many were the questions that Mrs. Howard and Marion asked, concerning his travels. He gave them a graphic, but thoroughly characteristic account of his wanderings, humorous when told in his own way, strangely evasive when given as an answer. Mrs. Howard was charmed, but Marion thoroughly bewildered. It was not until Sally entered to remind them that it was five o'clock, that they noticed how time was passing.

"By George!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet, "I promised my mother only to stop ten minutes, and I have been here an hour."

"Our toilette shall not detain you long," said Marion, as she tripped up stairs with her mother; "make friends with him, Tyrza."

Joe did not care much for cats, and yet in half a minute Tyrza was upon his new friend's knee, and positively rubbing his cold nose in his whiskers.

"Cool!" said Joe, stroking him; "do you know you're smothering me with hairs? but your mistress' cat may do whatever he likes."

"Marion," said Joe, as they neared the presbytery gate, "Father Stirling told me that he should be glad to see you this evening, for a few minutes, if you would run in."

"I had better go now, I think," said Marion.

"Certainly," replied Joe, "no time like the present; we will go forward and herald your approach at the Cedars. Come, Mrs. Howard."

"We will see her in at the gate first," said the mother, a very little nettled at her companion's want of gallantry.

"Yes, yes, I forgot; let me open it, Marion, and shut it after you too. Good-by—for ever."

The last two words were uttered in a whisper so low, that even Marion did not hear them; had she done so, or caught sight of the ashy face that turned from the gate as she passed up the path, her fancy might have pictured some deed of desperation. But it would have been a groundless fear; never had Joe prayed more fervently for her, and for himself, than at that moment, and those who pray are never desperate.

"I wonder what Father Stirling can want that child for, this evening. Some new case in her district, I suppose," said Mrs. Howard.

"Shall I tell you?" asked Joe.

"Do so," said Mrs. Howard, quickly, almost alarmed at her companion's manner.

The answer was such a long one, that though they were waiting tea at the Cedars, they walked past the lodge, and back again almost to the church, and then retraced their steps only to return. When, at length, Mrs. Howard entered the gate, her brain was whirling.

Father Stirling himself received Marion at the door, and led her into his little study.

"Are you in a hurry?" he asked.

"Not particularly; but I am going to the Cedars to spend the evening, and should not like to keep them waiting longer than I can help."

"I see. Well, there is a woman in the hall just at this moment, and I must speak to her. Will you come into the next room and stay a few minutes, till I am disengaged?"

"Certainly," said Marion, moving towards the door.

"Stop a minute; there is a gentleman there already, but you need not mind him, it is only a very old friend of mine, who has been spending an hour or so with me." He entered the room as he spoke, drew his arm-chair of state, as he called it, to the fire, and bade her make herself at home.

"I shall not be longer than I can help," he said, smiling; "I dare say I shall be able to despatch my visitor in ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. Will you do the honors for me," he added, turning to his friend, "and remind me to introduce you to this lady in due form, when I come back? I will not stay to do so now."

The afternoon had faded into a dull, dingy twilight, and the flickering fire cast an uncertain light upon the objects in the room. The stranger, who had risen upon their entrance, had resumed his seat by the window; at the further end of the apartment, and sat looking out into the garden, as though quite engrossed in its dimly visible grass-plot and flower-beds. So perfect a silence reigned,

that Marion soon forgot her companion's presence, and sat looking very tranquilly into the red coals, trying to read Joe Darrell. For once in her life she found this a difficult task. Accustomed, as she was, to his frank, careless manner, she had never before seen the vein of strange determination that now seemed to pervade every word and action, and our little heroine was puzzled. Whether or not she would have succeeded in deciphering Joe, must remain a secret, certain it is, she had not proceeded far towards doing so, when a voice from the other end of the room startled her from her thoughts.

"This is a very quiet spot," observed the stranger, who had again risen, and was standing with his back against the shutter, looking out with folded arms into the fast increasing gloom.

Slight as was the remark, there was a distinctness in the tone, a pathos in the voice, that thrilled Marion through, and she started perceptibly.

"Very quiet," continued the gentleman, as though talking to himself, "and so peaceful, one might almost imagine it exempt from the usual penalties of sin and sorrow."

"But such would be a false imagination," replied Marion, recovering herself; "our people are very good, but they both sin and suffer."

"So I suppose. If it were not so, many a weary man would seek to pitch his tent in such a valley of repose. I, for one, the weariest of the weary."

At another time it would have struck Marion as peculiar, that a stranger should thus allude to the

sorrows of his own life. As it was, she was alive to nothing but the tones of his voice, that quivered through her heart, like the echo of some old familiar song. She knew that she was in the presbytery parlor, but she knew no more. The past and present surged around her, her heart beat almost audibly, her very identity seemed fast forsaking her. There was again a silence, broken once more by the voice.

"Father Stirling has great influence here?"

"Very great, his will is law," she replied, making a mighty effort to answer calmly.

"Is he much beloved?"

"He could not be otherwise, for he loves every one."

"Even his enemies?" asked the stranger.

"He has none, except the world, the flesh, and the devil."

"Three too many for any man. But, if Father Stirling has such influence with his children, will he employ it, do you think, for me?"

"Why should he not?"

"Because I deserve nothing at his hands. Over and above his three great enemies, for many years he has had a fourth, and that fourth has been myself. He has forgiven me, and we are friends; but could he, think you, gain me the forgiveness of another, one who has been even more wronged than he?"

There was no answer.

"Listen, you shall hear. One day I came to this very town, full of a bright hope, I left it that

same evening in bitterness and wrath. I spurned a treasure I had coveted for years, and trampled under the foot of my pride and bigotry, the heart the only woman I had ever loved had yielded me."

He paused, but a marble pillar could not have been more motionless than his listener, and he went on.

"She was a fragile creature, but withstood, like a rock, the storm of persecution I called down upon her. She went on her bleak, strange path, and meekly fought her battle with the world. Could Father Stirling's meditation, do you think, gain me the forgiveness of this loving, bright-haired, deeply-injured woman?"

He crossed the room as he spoke, and stood beside her.

"No," replied Marion, firmly.

He started, visibly.

"No," she continued; "for forgiveness must follow the commission of a fault, and he who acts from conscience, however blindly, never does wrong."

"What would she do, then? Golden-hair, God has shown me the truth, and I too am a Catholic now. What would she do?"

"The will of God;" and the dancing fire-light shone on a flood of golden ringlets bowing very low, over hands that were joined in mute thanksgiving.

"Will you not forgive me, Golden-hair?"

The head was raised, and never did dancing fire-light fall on two more radiant faces.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ANOTHER year had passed away, and once again the leaves that had budded bright and green in the spring were blowing hither and thither with a mournful rustle, as the autumn wind swept by the turnpike road, and through narrow lanes, and across the wet dismal fields. How he soughed, and whined, and creaked, and whistled, that same sad spirit of the wind! now roaring with a demon voice across the forest and athwart the ocean, now moaning his low sad story far away among the distant hills. But nowhere did he howl among the chimneys, rattle the casements, or sough among the branches, as he did at the Cedars, one dreary, wet November night.

And yet, except from the echoes of the wind, the old house was very hushed. Soft were the footfalls that trod the stairs and corridors, and low the whispers that fell from time to time from anxious voices. It was evening, just the hour of the usual social tea-party, but no light hearts were gathering to-night. A dark shadow hung over the old house, and the day of music and laughter had gone by, for the sword of the destroyer was already half-unsheathed, and the light of the home already quivering in its socket.

Edith was dying. The cloud, large as a man's hand, had waxed larger throughout the year; the little cough had borne its fruit of death, and old Turner wept over the fulfilment of her dread. Yes, Edie was dying. The truth had dawned at last on all, and the frail hope that had borne them up, in spite of every fatal symptom, had given way in the face of the stern reality. Ten minutes before, all had been around her bed, the gray-haired father, in the bitter agony of grief restrained, and the mother, in the silent stupor of a life-long woe unrealized. Joe, too, had been there, changed in a few weary days, as only those can change who die, or watch the dying. But all these had left her; one by one they had stepped away from where they dared not linger. Not for worlds would they have called back to one throb of human sympathy the half-emancipated spirit, nor disturbed by human grief the raptures of her super-human joy. One watcher only was there, Edward Howard, but so changed, and worn, and wasted, that when he had arrived that afternoon, even Marion had hardly recognized him.

Edith was asleep, and, as he gazed on the face, changed by suffering, but still warm and young, not yet fixed, as every feature soon must be fixed, in death, tear after tear rolled down his cheek. Must she go? Could he live to lose her? With what a wild yearning wish he longed to clasp her to him, and defying even mortality, to cry, "I will not let thee go!"—"Is this resignation?" whispered a still small voice. It was unheard· what had

resignation to do with him? Was not Edith dying? Was not the day-star gliding from the firmament of his life? Falling on his knees, he poured forth a wild and passionate, almost complaining prayer, that even at this, the eleventh hour, the one joy of his life might be spared to him.

"Edward," said a voice, almost a whisper—"has Edward come?"

In an instant he was at her side.

She extended her thin white hand to him, and smiled, as, kneeling beside the couch, he pressed it to his lips.

"Have they told you I am dying?" she asked.

"Hush! hush, Edie! do not talk so! You are very ill just now, but it is only a fresh cold. You will get better, love. You look better even now than when I first came, indeed you do. Keep up your spirits, and all will be well."

The young girl smiled, not a sickly smile, but a bright, rapturous one, like a sudden flash from heaven. "No, Edward, you must look bravely at the truth. I am sinking very fast. But you must not give way to grief, for I look to you and Marion to make all the others bright. Will you try and do this, for my sake?"

He only bowed his head, but the tear-drops rained fast upon the fingers he held in his.

"Edward," she whispered, after a long silence, broken only by the ticking of the clock and her own short panting breath, "I did not expect this from you. You must be stronger."

"I cannot, Edie, I cannot! O, why cannot I die too?"

"Because it is not the will of God. Listen, Edward; do you believe I love you?"

"Is not your love my one sunbeam?"

"And yet, I am glad to leave you, and to leave papa and mamma too, and those I have loved at home, who have been more to me than I could ever say. But God and heaven are dearer, dearer far; and much as you were to me, Edward, in the world, I would not change my prospect of dying so soon, even to be to you all, we once thought, I should have been. Is it not a consolation that we shall meet again, if both are faithful, in heaven? Not as we have been here, in sunshine and shadow, meeting and parting, but as pure, bright, and yet identified spirits, basking in the perpetual presence of God! Edward, mamma is more resigned than you. She, with her mother's love, and weak woman's heart, says bravely, 'Thy will be done.' Will you not say so too?"

A groan was the only reply.

"Papa can say it," she continued, "and yet I was the darling of his old age. Joe whispers it a hundred times a day, and Emily, dear Emily, although I cannot see her, I know well she says it with one of her brightest smiles."

"Edie," he replied, "these are not alone; linked together, they bear their griefs in common; but I, fancy my lonely life without you. I, who have worked early and late to make you a home, shall I live in it alone and desolate?"

"No, Edward, for I believe God calls you to higher things. Do you remember Emily's prophecy, two years ago?"

"No, darling."

"Not while she was rustling the dead leaves in the Mill Lane? She said, 'You will be a priest, and you must say your first mass for Edith, and your next for me.' I do not think I should remember these words, so lightly spoken, just now, if they had passed with their echo. This, I believe, Edward, is your true vocation. 'Man proposes, God disposes,' and He never meant that I should be your wife. As I looked forward, I seem to see your future. You will not forget me, I know you never will; but my memory will be a chastened thing with you, and when you shall be a priest of the Most High God, you will cease to regret one who would have kept you from Him. I believe you will live to see, even on earth, that the stroke that has severed us from each other has united us both to Him. Is this thought a bright one?"

"A little star, Edie, on a very dark sky, that is all; and even this star only a thing of the imagination."

"It may be so, but the thought makes me very happy. It is enough to satisfy me, that the first glimpse of the idea has been to you even as a little star. I feel, in my own heart, that the bright spot will grow larger and larger when I am gone, until the beauty of one grand thought shall flood your soul; the one grand thought of living for God alone. All that is most beautiful on earth hovers within the vocation of a priest. After the words

of ordination, one who before was only simple natural man, goes forth on his mission, God-like in his powers and graces. For he speaks, and the Lord of heaven and earth lies beneath his hand, to be given to hungering and thirsting multitudes at the altar, or to be borne in his bosom, as our dear Lord will soon be borne to me, to light up the dark valley of the shadow of death. Again he speaks, and chains of sin that have rusted around their victim, fall from the sinner at his word, and he who was bound in iron fetters goes forth free. To attend the sick and dying, to comfort the weary, to feed the hungry, to teach the ignorant the one bright truth of God—is not this a higher, a far higher future than to spend a few short years with me? O! Edward, my first, my last, my only love, the latest thought of earth that will cling to me here below, will be a thought of this!"

She sank back exhausted, and closed her eyes.

"This has been too much for you, Edie," cried Edward, starting to his feet, seriously alarmed, "and it was all for me!"

"No," she returned, gently. "I am only a little tired; I shall be better directly. I cannot talk more to you now, much as I have that I could say; but, remember my words, Edward, although for nothing would I have them bind you. Not one earthly motive must mingle with such a thought as this. A vocation is the voice of God, and the power to follow it, God's work alone."

"Yes, yes," he whispered, as, once more sinking on his knees, he buried his face beside her.

"May God bless you for evermore," said the young girl, and, collecting her remaining strength, she raised his cold hand from the bed, and pressed it to her lips.

For two more days the lamp of life wavered and flickered, but, as the night of the second day closed in, all plainly saw that another sun would never raise for Edith Darrell. And yet not a sob, far less a murmur, broke the sweet silence of that chamber, when the angel of resignation hovered hand in hand with her sister death. Calmly, even as in days gone by she had helped the twins to arrange their altar, Marion, with noiseless footfall placed a table, with a crucifix and four lighted tapers by the bedside, and, as Father Stirling entered the room with slow and reverent step, even death was forgotten in the presence of its Victor. For who shall tell the thrill of rapture that ran through each weary heart, even in this dark hour of desolation, as the Sun of the Christian life flooded with his beams the shadows of the sick chamber?

Edith had been administered, and had received her last communion, and now, upon her mother's arm, slept her last earthly sleep. Father, brother, lover, friends, were grouped around her bed, and Father Stirling, very white and sad, knelt beside the child he had moulded with such earnestness for heaven. At length she stirred.

"Mamma."

"My child?"

"You will not stop long, not very long, will you?"

"I hope not, darling."

"Where is papa?"

A pressure of the hand was the only answer.

"Father Stirling?"

Even the mother made way for him, and he bent over her.

"Tell Edward—" the words were lost.

"Tell him what, dear child?"

"Tell him," she whispered, collecting all her remaining strength, "to do the will of God, only the will of God."

They were her last words. Five minutes later, amid the sobs of breaking hearts, Father Stirling was praying for the dead.

It was in the little chamber where Marion had first seen her eight years before, that Edie was laid in death, calm and cold, but even more beautiful than life. Two watchers were there, Marion and her brother, the latter kneeling and gazing on the marble face, striving to realize his loss.

"Will you stay here for a few minutes, if I go down stairs?" she asked, for she felt that he wished to be alone.

"I will. O! Golden-hair, you alone are left me now!" He rose and sank into a chair, and drawing her to him, rested his head upon her.

What could she say to comfort him, while death laid there beside them in all its iciness? She stood perplexed, and stooped and kissed his forehead.

"You have been very brave, dear; and she was so happy to go, that it would be wrong to sorrow much. Edward, my brother, how many times

darker your shadow would be, if you were not a Catholic."

"I know it," he replied; "but it is very heavy as it is, very, very heavy, Golden-hair. But I must not keep you, my child," he added, rising; "for I fancy Lisle has arrived; if so, I would not detain you from him for a minute. Go and see, God bless you."

When she had left him, he once more approached the bed, and removed the veil that Marion had laid over the face of the dead. Again he sank upon his knees, and tried to pray, but he felt hard and stony, and far away from God.

"How can I pray for her," he whispers, at length; "pray for her as one still suffering for sin? I cannot do it. I cannot fancy her anywhere but in heaven. O! Edie, Edie! pray for me instead," and a paroxysm of passionate grief burst from his lips. As he grew more tranquil, shocked at his own vehemence, a hand was laid upon his shoulder.

"Is this as it ought to be, my friend?"

Edward glanced for an instant at the speaker, then buried his face once more in his hands.

"Is this as it ought to be?" repeated Father Stirling; "or, is it as she would have it be?"

There was no answer, and the priest, walking slowly around the bed, in his turn raised the handkerchief from the face of the dead.

"She looks very happy, very peaceful," he said, softly, after a few moments' pause.

The young man rose, and placed himself beside the priest, who still held the handkerchief in his

hand. "What else could the sunset be, of such a life as hers," he asked, "but a peaceful one?"

"Will you say the *De Profundis* with me?" inquired the priest.

"Why should we say it, Father; she does not need it?"

"How so?" asked the priest, with a sad smile.

"What sins has she to expiate?" demanded Edward, almost fiercely.

"The heavens are not clean in the sight of God, and his angels he charges with folly. What then is earthly purity? Do be reasonable, dear Edward. What would she say to this, in her sweet humility, think you?"

"You are right," replied Edward; "grief has made me mad, I think;" and he responded as calmly to the prayer as though it had been offered for a stranger.

"Do you remember," asked the priest, when it was concluded, "that I was the last person to whom Edith spoke?"

"Of course I do."

"Shall I tell you what she said?"

"Yes, do; pray, do."

"These, then, were her last words: tell Edward—"

"Edward! Did she speak of me?"

"Tell Edward to do the will of God; only the will of God."

"Was that all?"

"Yes, all, and it was her last request, dear Edward; but, indeed you are not fulfilling it."

"You believe her words meant resignation?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Yes, but they meant more; sit in that chair, and I will tell you all," and in the chamber of death Edward Howard told the priest the whole of his last conversation with his betrothed. No one disturbed them, all by intuition left to themselves; and though the daylight faded quite away, and the waxen tapers cast a sad funereal glow upon them, still they talked on, in low whispers, as though they feared to wake the sleeper at their side. For not till peace, and hope, and perfect resignation reigned in the bosom of his sorrowing friend, did Father Stirling leave him and the silent chamber, to join the mournful party, in the hardly less silent drawing-room below.

"Is he better?" asked Henry Lisle, grasping the priest's hand, as he entered.

"Much better, almost himself."

"Thank God!" cried Mrs. Darrell, "for I began to fear we were to lose him too."

He was better; the bitterness that had tortured his soul had melted away before the soft words of charity and gentle reproach that had been poured into it, and he could even look on the sweet white face before him with a smile.

"Tell Edward to do the will of God," he repeated, softly. "Amen! Amen! Yes, whithersoever it shall lead me, Edie, even to giving you up willingly;" he paused; "yes, willingly to God. Father, in this, as in all things, may Thy will be done!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"FATHER DUNSTAN?"

"*Plait-il, Monsieur?*

"*Le père Anglais.*"

"*Ah, oui, oui, monsieur. Traversez donc la cour, et entrez au petit parloir là en face, je le ferai appeler,*" and the Englishman and his bride crossed the square of the old Dominican convent, and entered the plain little parlor to await "*le père Anglais.*"

"It is very quiet here," remarked the lady, taking one of the rush chairs.

"Very; one would hardly imagine that the life of a great city whirled past the doors. But it is very dull and gloomy-looking, even to-day; indeed, I think this June sunshine falling upon the white unshaded flags, makes it look even more so by the contrast. Much as I admire the order of St. Dominic, I cannot imagine a vocation that would have led me here."

"No one can say what he would, or would not do under other circumstances," replied the lady; "for myself, I fancy if I were a *religieuse*, this is just the spot I should like to be in. Solitude in the very midst of a large sphere of action."

"O, Marion, if you had only seen the lovely

convents I have sometimes met with, sheltered among hills, embowered in trees, or buried in peaceful valleys bright with flowers, you would not say so."

"Yes, Harry, I would. In this world I love and admire these things very much, but were I consecrated to God, I would not have nature itself divide my love, but would wish to live and labor for Him, and Him alone."

"Enthusiastic child!" exclaimed the husband, smiling; "but to come down to common-place affairs, do you know that I have had two letters this morning, one from Edward, and the other from Joe? I meant to have brought them with me," he continued, "but I find I have left them on my dressing-table. It is a pity, for I could have read them to you, as we are sure to be kept waiting some time. That is, I believe, 'a rule without an exception,' observed with regard to convent visitors."

"Did either of them say anything particular?"

"Nothing. Edward's was full of young men's associations, clothing societies, and poor-schools; Joe's, like himself, John Bull to the letter as usual."

"Poor, dear boys. I am glad they are well. Did you not think they both looked particularly happy the day we were married?"

"Edward did, and was, for I believe he thought Golden-hair's happiness secured, and I trust in God that his confidence may not be misplaced; but Joe was masked to the life."

"Do you think so?"

"Do I not know it, you little puss? Ah, Marion, if ever you get half the devotion from your husband, that you have had, and still have, from him, you will be one wife in a hundred."

"Harry!"

"You will, for Joe Darrell did that for your sake and your happiness, that, dearly as I love you, I never could have done."

"In what way?"

"He labored with every energy to remove the obstacle that lay between you and another. Marion, I have known that boy steal into my room after I have been in bed, and stand beside me half the night, trying with all his powers of eloquence, to teach me some Catholic truth. At one time, in Germany, he slept in a room next to mine, where he had a little iron bedstead that creaked if he only stirred. Often, for two or three hours after he has left me, I have not heard a sound, and once I grew so fidgety about him, that in my turn I arose and went quietly to his room, and I found the bed still undisturbed and Joe upon his knees. And his prayers and perseverance did their work, for, stranger as I believed Joseph Fortescue to be to me and mine, I felt there must be something in a religion that could make a young man as earnest as this. Looking at you by my side, Golden-hair, my own little wife, I feel there is nothing I could not have done to gain you: but to labor to lose you! only an angel, or Joe Darrell, could have done that."

"Poor Joe! How sad to think that he is not happy."

"I do not say that, for a nature such as his, must be happy in the odor of its own good actions. Joe will be a rich man too, and universally loved and respected, but his will be a lonely life."

"I wish he would take a fancy to Jessie Seymour, for I am sure she likes him."

"But is in no way suited to him," replied Mr. Lisle.

And here followed such a long dissertation on the suitability and unsuitability of husbands and wives in general, that though a full half hour passed by, it was not until a church clock in the neighborhood struck the hour, that Henry Lisle remembered he was waiting, and had a right to be impatient.

"Really, these holy fathers keep their visitors waiting a most tremendous time," he exclaimed, rising to survey the quadrangle through the open glass door; "why, this is worse than going to see Emily."

"I wonder whether he is changed."

"Not much, my dear, I should imagine; he has only left us, remember, twelve months."

At this moment a door opened suddenly, and a friar in the Dominican habit stood before them.

"George!" cried Henry Lisle, grasping his hand.

"Father Stirling!" and joy inexpressible beamed from Marion's blue eyes; "I am so glad to see you."

"And so am I glad to see you," returned the friar; "and would not have kept you waiting so long, but we were at Office. When I heard that

an English lady and gentleman were waiting for me, I immediately guessed they were Mr. and Mrs. Lisle," and he laughed as in old times, as he pronounced the latter name.

"You look very well," observed Mr. Lisle.

"And seem very happy," added Marion.

"So I am, dear child, so I am; well, you look happy, too."

"Ought I not to be so?" asked Marion, behind her curls.

"Most decidedly; but you think I have not such good reason to felicitate myself, I can see."

"No, I do not, for I know you will be happy wherever you are; but I think you might have stayed with us, you could not be better than you were."

"Does she flatter you like that, Henry? But now tell me, have you two been so engrossed in each other, that you have forgotten to bring me any news? You know, I am a regular old gossip. First of all, please to remember, I am quite in the dark as to the chain of events that have given me the honor of this visit. Not very long since, I had a letter from a certain friend of mine, speaking of himself as neither flesh nor fowl, clerk nor layman, and lamenting his limited resources, which, unless he could find something to augment them, must postpone his marriage *sinè die*. Most sincerely he had my sympathy, and I wrote and told him so, although, looking on his lot from a Christian point of view, it was so rich in crosses, that I could not help slyly congratulating him in my heart. Not

six months afterwards, I get a hurried scrawl, telling me to expect a visit from him on his wedding trip. Now, I certainly have enough of Mother Eve in me to want to know how all this has come about."

"It will not be a very long story. Do you remember my father's old Uncle Saunders?"

"Very well; and what a comical old soul he was."

"You remember his quarrel with my father, upon some point of Sabbath observance?"

"Of course I do, and that he actually altered his will in consequence."

"Yes, in favor of some very distant relations. Well, then, he died about four months since, and they in their turn having offended him, he has left the whole of a very substantial fortune to my sister Agnes and myself. As the disinherited parties are already rich, and there never was a shadow of justice, or common sense, in the alteration of the original will, most thankfully have I accepted my portion."

"And where do you purpose pitching your tent?"

"Now, you must prepare for a surprise. The fact is, linked as the old house is with the past, it has not unnaturally grown distasteful to Mr. and Mrs. Darrell. They have, therefore, taken a house for themselves and Joe in London, and I have purchased the Cedars."

"And long may you live to enjoy it, my dear friend. Changes! changes! changes!"

"Changes!" repeated Henry Lisle; "there have been so many lately, that I sometimes begin to

question my own identity, and feel ready to declare, like the old woman in the story book, 'I'm sure it can't be I.' Imagine, George, if on the day of my ordination, I—"

"Just hark at him, 'My ordination!' When were you ordained, I should like to know?"

"Well, then, on the day I went to sleep and dreamed that I was ordained. Will that do? Imagine if I could have looked forward and seen myself a layman, calling on you, a monk!"

"The latter would not have surprised you much, would it? for I had shown you my horns and hoofs by then."

"I know you had, but strange as I thought you, I never dreamed of such a step as this."

"Nor I," said the *religieux*, gravely. "God unfolds his purposes very slowly. How is Edward?"

"Just as you would have him—heart and soul in his work. He will soon have his tonsure. I called on him the week before last, to tell him the day that had been fixed for the wedding, and I saw the superior of the community. He told me that he had rarely met with so earnest a character as Edward Howard's in his life. His one grand thought seems to be the preservation and reclamation of young men. To hear him talk, one would imagine that he had never had another aim in his life."

"He could not have a higher aim, nor a wider field to work in, than he will have in London. I suppose he did not mention Edith."

"Yes, he did, in congratulating me."

"What did he say?" asked the priest, bending his gray eyes anxiously upon him, for he was thinking of a struggle he had once witnessed in a very still room.

"These were his words: 'I could never have imagined that the day could come, when I could say truthfully, I do not envy you. But I say so to-day; Edith was right, this is my true vocation. All my life, even her love, has been a preparation for it, and the shadows of the past are now quite merged in the glory of the great work that lies before me.'"

"Thank God, thank God!" said the priest. "Truly you have a noble-hearted brother, Mrs. Lisle."

Marion started at the name so unfamiliar in his lips.

"Ah, my child," he continued, rubbing his hands, "once upon a time we little thought you would ever bear that name!"

"Or that somebody else would be called Father Dunstan, instead of his good old Scotch name, that had served his family so long," exclaimed Henry Lisle.

"See how he is down upon me," cried Father Dunstan, laughing heartily. "Do you mean to say you are not yet Catholic enough to have a devotion for St. Dunstan? Why, man, he was one of the greatest champions the Church ever had."

"So I suppose, but I have somehow an un-

pleasant association with him of a hot pair of tongs, that I cannot quite get rid of."

"Ah, little lady, this husband of yours carries a good share of Protestantism about with him even yet, I can see."

"No, really, Father, he is getting to be a very good Catholic, though I think yesterday you would have been rather shocked at us both, if you could have heard the very unorthodox meditation we were making in the train. Shall I say what it was, Harry?"

"If you like; but prepare yourself for a scolding."

Father Dunstan laughed. "What a dragon you make the old father out to be! Come, Mrs. Lisle, I am not going to scold, so give me the result of the meditation."

"It was only this, that what is so often said by people out of the Church, about Protestant countries being more civilized than Catholic ones, seems really to be true. How is it?"

"First of all, I am not going to admit the statement, you may rest assured, though if it were true, and Catholic countries were in the lowest condition of civil, and if you will, of literary degradation, and if all Protestant ones were models of human advancement and research, I should only reply that it proved that the good things of heaven and the good things of earth were in the inverse ratio of each other. If it were not so, if religious truth and human prosperity always went hand in hand, what a glorious worship that of the sun

must have been, if we are to judge of it by its temple at Palmyra. What an amount of holiness, too, must have concentred in the Egyptian's adoration of his cats, dogs, and mummies, if we are to gauge it by the breadth of his cities, the height of his pyramids, and the glory of his sciences. There have been Hindoo temples, Carthaginian temples, Mexican temples, whose magnitude and grandeur one must have seen to realize—was the shadow of God in them, or in the tent of badger skins, over the Mercy-seat in the wilderness? Are there not Protestant lands, Protestant cities, Protestant institutions, on which the ghost of the ancient Roman from the ruins of his Coliseum, or of the Athenian from his Acropolis, would look down in scorn? What may be said of men collectively, as nations, may be said of them individually, remember. Was the truth with the rich and prosperous citizens who rambled through Nero's pleasure-grounds to enjoy his feast, or with the miserable Christians who burnt in wax and resin to light up their amusements? Is it Dives who inherits the reward, or the beggar Lazarus, who lies at his gate?—the poor man with his woes, his want of civilization, and his ignorance of this world's lore, who shall find it hard to enter heaven, as 'the camel to go through the needle's eye,' or he who is rich in goods, deep in wisdom, standing in the high places? Human prosperity the touch-stone of religious truth! Henry Lisle! Henry Lisle! divine of the English Church! student of the Protestant Bible from your youth, surely, surely, you must have

read it bottom upwards, or you could have answered your little wife yourself."

"No doubt I did," exclaimed the gentleman thus apostrophized, laughing heartily; "the worthy father must have made a mental reservation though, Marion, when he promised not to scold you, that he would give me a double dose instead."

"Well, it is rather too bad, I must confess," replied the priest, "though, if I am too hard upon you, you must forgive me, just as you used many years ago, when I sometimes gave you an extra dig in an amicable fight. You have not told me yet how you like my successor."

"I have seen very little of him, but Marion says he gets on very well."

"Very well, but he finds it no enviable path to follow you. He is young and inexperienced, and must spend many more years of love, and strength, before his flock will love him, and obey him, as they loved and obeyed Father Stirling."

The priest's eyes glistened, but he only raised his rosary, and pressed a wire.

"God bless them all, my poor dear children," he murmured gently, as he let it fall. "Is Turner a Catholic yet?"

"No, just as far off as ever, but just as firm in her 'creed of faith, hope, and charity,' as you once styled it."

"Enough to take her to heaven, simple old soul. How is Mr. Gardiner?"

"The same. He has been lately preaching a set

of sermons, to prove every word of the Anglican prayer-book conformable to her creed."

"What a clever man he must be! Of course he commenced by defining that creed. The best way to do that, I should imagine, would be to add High-church, Low-church, Middle-church, and Broad-church up together, and take the average. If I had been in my old post, I think I would have proposed that to him before he began. It might have given him a wrinkle. How is his *cara sposa!*"

"What Joe says she always was, his master."

"Poor man, he has his good points though, and so has she."

"But they are stifled beneath that 'clerical pride' that spoils half the Anglican clergymen and their families," said Henry Lisle.

"What a strange thing that is!" said Father Dunstan, shaking his head gravely.

"But no less strange than true," replied the other, "no less strange than true."

"When did you last see Emily?" asked the priest, turning to Marion.

"About a month since."

"And how did she look?"

"More beautiful than ever, if possible, and so bright and cheerful. Something brought up poor Edith's name, and she talked of her just as naturally as I should talk of seeing mamma, when we go back. It almost seemed as she spoke, as though death were a white angel."

"Do you always then fancy him a black one?"

"Yes. Does he not seem so to you, Father?"

"No, no. Lustrous in his whiteness, bright and flashing as the chariot that bore Elias to his rest. It is a great mistake, my child, to invest this radiant form with aught of gloom or terror, or to look upon our greatest friend as an enemy. It is good for us to be here, but better to be in heaven."

Marion stole a glance at a pair of eyes, bent fondly upon her.

"Yes, better to be in heaven," repeated the friar, smiling, "though it is hard, I know, to think so, in the first flush of a great earthly joy. But, as I said just now, it is good for us to be here. Good, whether our path shall lead through the sweet communion of married life, or the silent life of the cloister, provided it be ever onward, upward, heavenward, Godward. You must not forget that this is no abiding city, and you will not forget it, but, side by side, you will pass to that better heaven, helping each other forward. All that I wish for you," he added solemnly, almost reverently, "I cannot speak. For Henry Lisle, son of my benefactor, and friend of my youth, or for his little wife, my own child in Christ. No, no, I cannot tell you all I wish, all I pray for. On earth," he continued, with a kindling eye, "the spirit cannot find utterance for its greatest thoughts, its strongest sympathies, its deepest yearnings, but in that Better Land, that shining, lustrous realm of the Hereafter, the spirit's voice shall be loosed, and then, if we be but faithful, you shall read the uttermost depths of what I this day feel."

"Father," whispered Marion, after a short pause,

"do you mean to say that you will never come back to England?"

"In all human probability, never."

"Does not this grieve you?"

"No, my child; if a little feeling of home sickness ever comes over me, I think of the Land we were just now talking of, the only Fatherland of the Dominican."

"But you have not yet taken the step that binds you irrevocably to this order," said Mr. Lisle, anxiously.

"Not yet, but I trust soon to do so."

"Then let me say just one word, George, my dear old friend. Had your life been in England a useless one, I could have rejoiced in it; had it been an unconsecrated one, I could have understood it; but living as you did, every thought and sympathy given to God, why should you leave us?"

"Because He so willed it."

"I cannot think it, indeed; indeed I cannot, your life at Harleyford was so useful! Who is to convert the Protestants there now?"

"Father Dalton, while I do my best to reclaim infidels."

"But, your poor?" pleaded Marion.

"Are around me here," replied the priest.

"But we miss you so much, father, so very much; the whole place seems altered now."

"Poor Father Dalton, I am sure, from what I saw of him, is a most zealous young man, and yet you quite leave him out in your calculations."

"Yes, he is very good, but he need not leave, even if you come back; he could stay and help you."

"Little temptress!"

"No indeed—but if you had only told us, father, that you were going for good!—but to leave us for a month, and then never to return—it was very cruel!" And Marion burst into tears.

"Come, come. What! crying in the honey-moon! Henry, do you allow this?"

"I cannot blame her for what, if I were a woman, I should do myself."

"I must not rely on your assistance, I can see," replied the priest, smiling; "the last injunction then that the old father shall lay on Marion Howard of other days, shall be, that if ever she gives him a thought, it shall be with a prayer, not a tear. Will she obey it?"

"She will," said Marion, drying her eyes.

"And now," said the priest, "there is one thing I have just remembered I had to say to you. Notwithstanding the careful inventory I thought I had made of all my worldly goods, one item, and that rather a bulky one, has been omitted. If you will accept it, Henry, it is yours; it will, I know, bring back many a treasured reminiscence to your wife."

"Of course I will accept it properly, and with thanks."

"Do not be too sure, it is by no means either a treasure or a beauty."

"What is it?"

"Old Rufus."

"O! father!" cried Marion, "I would rather have him than anything in the world. I will ride him myself as long as he lives."

"Or as long as you do, which would probably be five minutes after you mounted him. They say you must not 'look a gift horse in the mouth,' but I would advise you to look at him on all sides, before you accept him, for he has neither beauty, value, nor temper."

"But he belonged to George Stirling, and while there is corn and grass-land in my possession, he shall have his share," replied Henry Lisle.

"You will find him then in the paddock, behind the presbytery, whither he was transferred last week from the stables of the Green Dragon, where, to judge by the bill I received for him, he must have been 'eating his own head off' for the last six months."

"Yes, I saw him in the paddock the day before we left," said Marion; "nor was I the only one who did so. If you could have heard the exclamations of the village children when they recognized him through the hedge, you would never have forgotten it. 'Father Stirling's horse! Father Stirling's horse!' I am sure they fancied he was only a herald to his rider. Father, father, how deeply you are loved in Harleyford! How can you leave us?"

"No man living, my child," he replied solemnly, "has not his earthly fetters, and mine indeed were wreaths of flowers. How I loved you all, God only knows. 'The lines had fallen to me in pleasant

places.' Do not think your pastor has left you without regret, many a tendril was wrenched and broken when he tore his heart from its old resting-place, but it is over now, and truly, he is a happy man."

"And so am I happy," said Henry Lisle, laying his hand on the shoulder of his little bride.

"And so are you happy," repeated the Dominican, smiling benevolently on them. "Each of us, I trust, fulfilling his vocation, as God would have him."

Half an hour later, Father Dunstan stood alone, while the echo of a closing gate still rang upon his ear. It is not often monks indulge in reveries, what could he be thinking of? It would be hard to guess, gentle reader, for athwart his face there ran a varying expression, like the lights and shadows of an April landscape. Did the words of an old friend, and the pleading glance of a little fragile figure still hover around him? Perhaps. It may be that the reverie was a thing of human regret, and superhuman hopes, of earthly temptations, and celestial trust and confidence. But even as he lingered, the sound of the vesper bell stole along the corridors, and home, friends, and kindred, were soon forgotten, as the glorious notes floated upward from the white-robed choir:

"Laudate Dominum omnes gentes,
Laudate eum omnes populi."

And Golden-hair tripped through the streets of the foreign city by her husband's side, joy

in her step, light in her eye, love in her overflowing heart. Sweet little Golden-hair! Twenty times a day Henry Lisle pressed the little hand, to be sure of its identity. Was it possible! Could it be true!

Old Rufus has now, for many a day, been trotting around his new master's fields, and has grown so subdued with increase of years, that even a little Marion has been held upon his back. For many a day too, a son of St. Dominic has been passing silently on his humble path, little known in the land of strangers. And yet he is not forgotten,—not forgotten in the little church with the gilded tabernacle, in the cottage homes of Harleyford, or beneath the cedars; for kindly words, and loving deeds, live long in the hearts of men: not forgotten in the Fatherland, where the Lord of the harvest, with His Own Hand garners the sheaves that have grown on this poor earth, and where, at the great Harvest-home, the laborers who shall have borne the heat of the day shall find the fruit of their toil faithfully stored for Eternity.

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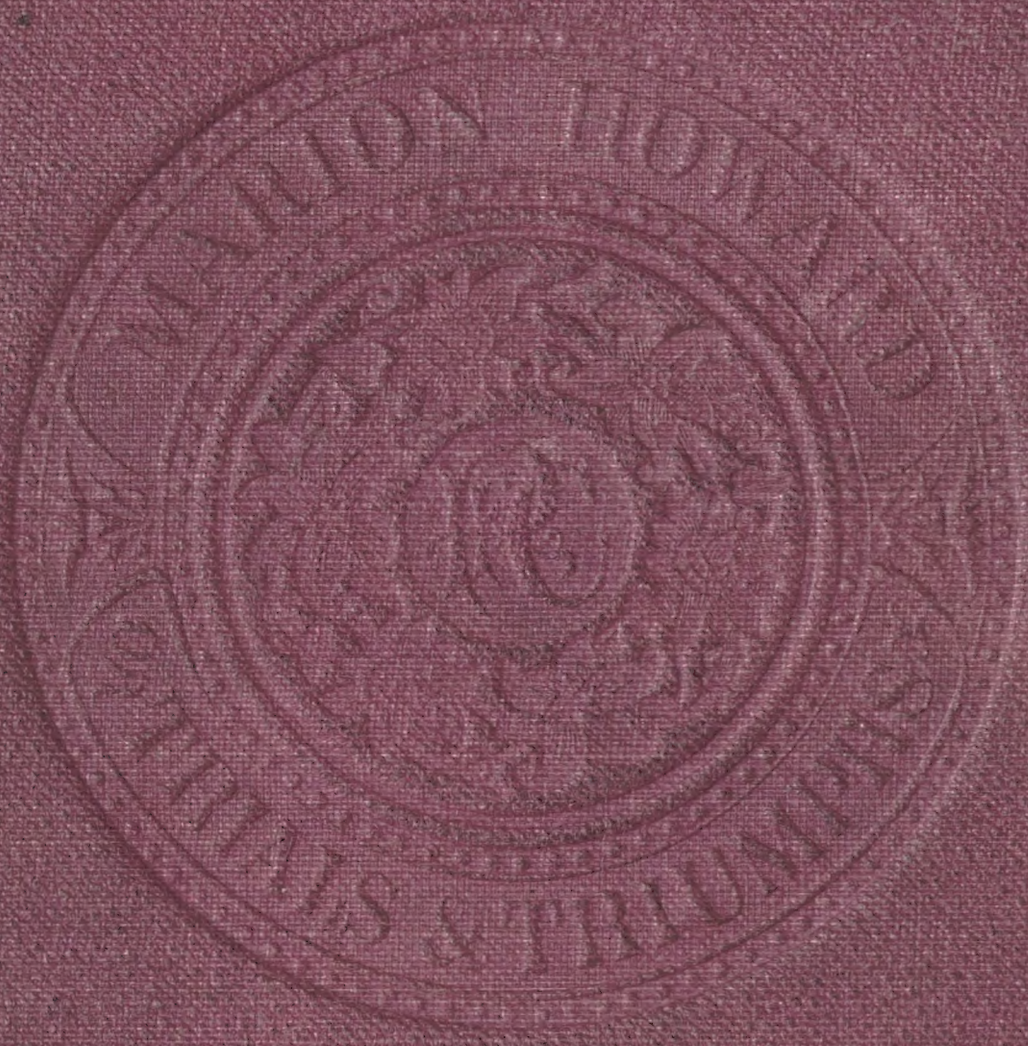
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